



# THE CONSORT OF MUSIC

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THE  
CONSORT OF MUSIC

A STUDY OF  
INTERPRETATION AND ENSEMBLE

BY

J. A. FULLER-MAITLAND

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TO  
CANON PEMBERTON  
(FORMERLY CANON HUDSON)

WHO LONG AGO OPENED FOR ME THE GATES INTO  
THE HAPPY REGION OF CONCERTED MUSIC, AND  
WHO, BY HIS TECHNICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT, UNTIRING  
ENTHUSIASM, ARTISTIC INSIGHT, AND CATHOLIC  
TASTE, HAS CONFERRED UPON MANY MUSICIANS  
MORE BENEFITS THAN THEY CAN EVER REPAY, THIS  
ATTEMPT TO PUT INTO WORDS SOME OF THE  
MUSICAL SECRETS HE KNOWS SO WELL IS MOST  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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# ERRATA

P. 63 : *for* at No. 10 *read* above

P. 76 : *read* and the pace of the movement must be decided accordingly.

Pp. 192, 240 : *for* Reiter *read* Ritter

1744 *Fuller-Maitland's Consort of Music.* Feb. 1915.

*Face p. vi.*

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## INTRODUCTION

MODERN English lacks an exact equivalent for the French word 'ensemble', and this, though useful, is yet so far from beautiful as an adaptation that the revival of the good old word 'consort' seems very desirable. Besides the fact that its use as a musical term is considered obsolete by the dictionary-makers, the main objection to its employment is its similarity to 'concert', with which it has in truth very little in common. No doubt at one time 'a consort of music' meant very much what a 'concert' means now; but the term carried with it no suggestion of public or formal performance. As to 'concert', which comes to us from the Italian *concerto* (to the confusion of translators the same word, or 'Konzert', is used in German for *concerto* and *concert*), it is suggested in the *New English Dictionary* that the verb *concertare* may at first have conveyed the idea of emulation such as too often disfigures the modern concert; 'consort', on the other hand, can only mean the accord of several musical factors in harmonious association, in fact, exactly what the French call *ensemble*.



Another musical term now unused, but, like 'consort', enshrined in one of Milton's nobles poems, conveys nearly the same idea, and 'concent' too is often confused with the similarly pronounced 'consent'.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, for a perfect performance in public, it may be said that all four are required; there must be *consent*, or the fellow-feeling for each other among the executants; *concent*, or the power of making voices or instruments blend together; *consort*, or such perfection of association as may be attainable; and *concert*, including perhaps some friendly rivalry as well as the apparatus of a public performance.

In spite of the etymological propriety of the old word which appears in the title, I think it best to use, throughout the book, the recognized term *ensemble*, since so very many non-executive musicians, and not a few performers, are strangely ignorant of what is meant by the spirit of concerted music. Ensemble may perhaps be defined as that kind of co-operation in music in which each performer bears some share of responsibility

<sup>1</sup> The word 'concent' might well be revived in practical music, for in its Italian form, *concento*, it once meant the simultaneous playing of the notes of a chord and thus the reverse of *arpeggio*. This effect when needed has now to be enjoined by the clumsy direction *non arpeggiando*.

for the general effect, as well as for the correct execution of the notes set before him. In this aspect of associated music, it will be seen that the responsibility for a good performance of choral or orchestral music rests, not with the individuals, but with the conductor of the whole, so that the chapters devoted to these two kinds of music are necessarily a little off the main trend of our inquiry; but even here there is such a thing as ensemble, though the duty of obtaining it rests with one man, not with many. While a good ensemble is not difficult to recognize when it is present, its absence is very seldom assigned as a reason for the hearers' lack of pleasure, or for their feeling that all has not gone well, though each of the performers may be an accepted master in his own department. This important branch of musical art is naturally studied as carefully as may be at our great music-schools, but for those who have not the advantage of such surroundings, or of constant intercourse with executants more highly equipped than themselves, it seems strange that no written words should exist to help them in the study of what all critics are fond of insisting upon as an essential part of a good performance. It is because of this lack of practical guidance that I have ventured to draw attention to some of the

main principles of ensemble in various kinds of music; for it often happens that even accomplished professional artists seem completely oblivious of the cause that makes their concerted efforts vain.

\* It might be suggested that the whole of excellence in ensemble is summed up in the single word, self-abnegation, that it is only necessary to withdraw from prominence at the moment of performance to attain a good ensemble. The unselfishness here implied is indeed at the root of good ensemble, and to such an extent that we might also claim to know the disposition and character of players or singers from their skill in concerted music. But even here the converse would not be true, for the most altruistic and sympathetic amateur may have no notion of applying his virtues to the interpretation of music, and it is quite clear that a great deal more than constant self-repression is wanted even in an accompanist, that office which is usually held to be the humblest a musician can be called on to fill, though in reality it is only the most highly organized musical natures that can fill it properly. I have heard Schumann's *Dichterliebe* accompanied with exquisite delicacy and understanding as long as the singer was occupied, but the effect of the

whole cycle ruined by a kind of shyness and reserve in the instrumental epilogue, no doubt due to the pianist's reluctance to 'take the middle of the stage'. The result to the listener was an impression that the player did not care very much what he was doing, and that the interest of the composition, for him as for the singer, had ceased with the sung words.

The phrase just employed, 'to take the middle of the stage,' will perhaps help us more than anything else to understand the essence of musical ensemble. The excellence of stage ensemble, for which the best French actors have been justly renowned, has indeed revolutionized the theatrical art of England in the last half century or so. The visits of the Théâtre Français in 1871 and later, and that of the Saxe-Meiningen company later still, opened the eyes of English managers to the fact that here was a degree of accomplishment such as had never occurred to them even to desire. The trail of the old state of things is to be discovered without difficulty in various London theatres to-day, where the limelight follows the principal character about with such idleness that all illusion is dispelled. The interplay of the various parts in a modern drama was a quality almost unknown in England till the

Bancrofts, Mr. Cyril Maude, and some other managers showed what could be done with it and as every one knows, the newer English drama of men like Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, and Granville Barker, depends far more on a good ensemble of acting than on any other merit of production. Just as subordinate actors of the old school used to withdraw into corners and converse in dumb show, while the chief performer was tearing a passion to tatters at the footlights, so an inferior performer of concerted music will sometimes make his part merely dull when it ought to have life though not prominence, and in some climax he will make his own part so conspicuous as to destroy the balance of the whole. Few critics of the older school will fail to remember the performance of oratorios in the 'eighties and 'nineties, when one member of a vocal quartet dowered with a voice of exceptional power, would so predominate in what ought to have been concerted music, that the rest of the party were fain to lay down their books and keep silence.

Even if we accept the definition that the art of ensemble is the knowledge of when to increase or decrease the amount of tone relatively to that employed by the other musicians, we have not yet satisfied the requirements of this perplexing

study, for it is possible to make quite a soft phrase prominent, while quite a loud one may be withdrawn to a subordinate position for a moment, just as a principal actor, even without the help of limelight, may be recognized as a character of importance, though he may enter at the back of the stage.

In the following pages I have tried to analyse some of the difficult points of musical ensemble in various kinds of compositions, for there is not one in which a good ensemble will not be of value. It may be said that only long experience can make a perfect artist in concerted music, and this is undoubtedly true, but the journey of the artist towards the ideal may often be helped by hints on things that may seem unimportant details to those who take a superficial view. The frequency of exhibition of bad ensemble on the part of eminent musicians should be enough to encourage the hope that any practical suggestions, however elementary, may be of use.

The fact that the following pages deal exclusively with music of what is known as the 'classical period' calls for a word of explanation. In respect of the special qualities needed for a good ensemble, classical music has infinitely more opportunities than any other kind for their

exercise; the difference between a fine ensemble and one of inferior quality is more strongly marked in classical music than elsewhere, and it may even be maintained that classical music is not really complete without some instinct of ensemble on the part of those who perform it. Before the time of Bach, it is not at all easy to find instrumental music which presents any kind of problem to the concerted player; the prominence of one instrument or group of instruments is evidently to be maintained in some passages, and in many others a satisfactory effect is reached if all the instruments in the rudimentary orchestra play the allotted notes in the right time. From the infrequency of written marks of expression, even after such marks were generally understood, we may gather that the musicians of old time attached far less importance than we do to what is now called 'light and shade'. Beyond some conventional 'echo' effects, contrasts and gradations of tone alike must have been rare in actual performance. An instrument used in an *obbligato* accompaniment usually went on pretty continuously through the movement in which it was employed; and very slight and casual must have been the changes in force that were actually heard. The 'fantasies' of Orlando Gibbons and

his contemporaries have so clear a notion of all their parts that those which need to be prominent can hardly help being prominent, and even the concerted sonatas of Purcell are so limpid, as compared with later work, that the insertion of marks of expression, other than the slightest, seems an impertinence on the part of editors. In concerted vocal music, such as the motet and madrigal, which was the crowning glory of the art before the classical period, a very subtle kind of ensemble must have been practised by all the performers. But this *genre* and its ideal performance would need a whole volume, not part of a chapter, to itself.

Different causes have determined the limitations of the book at the other end. It is a common error that for certain writers music ceased with the death of Brahms, but at the same time it is pretty generally agreed that his death synchronized roughly with the beginning of the great change that has passed over the art of music in recent years, and the date 1900 will probably be as convenient a landmark as 1600 has been for the other great musical revolution. The music that is representative of the twentieth century is still in the making, and at present we have but little assurance that any of the ultra-modern



composers cherish ideals which will undergo a radical change within a few years. The chaotic state of present-day music, however, is not the only reason for closing this study of ensemble at the end of the classical period. It is a common place of criticism to speak of the structural element in music as analogous to 'drawing', and of the mastery over instrumental and vocal tones as 'colour'; accepting these terms, we may compare the art of ensemble to perspective. As perspective is a way of making objects appear to the spectator to stand out one from another, so ensemble presents the hearer with music on different planes. It follows naturally from this that the art of musical perspective, as we may call it, is of paramount importance in the music that deals with form rather than with colour; and as all the ultra-modern writers are mainly occupied with questions of musical colour, any discussion of their music from the point of view of ensemble must be purely speculative. Again, they are adepts in placing their ideas in the most favourable light, or at least in the light they desire; so that little more is needed for the right interpretation of their music than to play or sing what the composer has set down, at the right pace and with

the right degree of force. It may well happen that some day a new art of ensemble may be required to interpret the compositions of these men or their successors ; but for the present the classical period, taking that term in its largest sense, contains quite enough to occupy our attention.



BOOK I

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

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## CHAPTER I

### THE ORCHESTRA

THE word ensemble is so very generally applied to chamber music and to that almost exclusively, that it seems something of a paradox to begin an examination of its elements with a kind of music from which by the nature of the case its most characteristic feature is excluded. For in orchestral performance there is no responsibility on the part of the players to strive for a good ensemble; the skill required is not collective, but individual, since praise or blame in this regard is justly bestowed on the conductor. In the older days of orchestral playing, when the dividing-line between chamber music and a 'band' was much less sharply drawn than it afterwards became, and when the 'conductor' sat at the piano to fill in gaps in the harmony or to rectify mistakes, the chief players in each department may have felt a certain amount of responsibility towards each other, and have been to some extent conscious of the general effect, but in the present day it is most improbable that any of the

best players in an orchestra have any other ideal than to fulfil as closely as they may the wishes of the conductor, with whom therefore it rests to secure a good ensemble.

Short of the creative gift, the most precious that can be bestowed on mortal man, no possession of the musician is so important as that of ability to conduct an orchestra. The days of mere time-beating are happily over, and the indication of speed and force is now the lightest of the conductor's duties. He must acquire such easy dominance over his band that they will obey his slightest wish, even if he should change his mind as to a 'reading' at the moment of performance. The attainment of such perfect command belongs of course to the technique of the conductor's art, just as much as the choice of a system of beating time which shall indicate his wishes as clearly as possible. The young conductor, whether professional or amateur, who tries his powers in England will find one very great difficulty, the existence of which is a scandal to the whole profession of orchestral players. Some of the older members of the regular London orchestras were at one time accustomed to test the powers of any budding conductor by deliberately disobeying his directions, playing softly when his gestures

icated a wish for loud sound, and vice versa. Happy was the conductor to whom this sort of thing happened only at rehearsal; it has been known to occur at concerts, where the culprits thought themselves safe from observation. Actual wrong notes have been perpetrated, and by musicians who are trained to be absolutely perfect readers. I myself have witnessed no more than five instances of this disgraceful custom; three of the instances were under the conductorship of men who have since risen to great eminence, and in all five the incident, which to the players was merely a clumsy sort of school-prank, was detected and commented on by the conductor. Remonstrance is in vain after the wrong has been done; but in such cases the conductor is quite justified in declining the future services of the orchestra whose members have played him such a trick. Concert engagements, say nothing of rehearsals, are highly enough paid to warrant the authorities in regarding them as a matter of business; the trick I have referred to is a deliberate breach of contract, none the less because it would be impossible to bring it to a court of law, or to get a British jury to understand the circumstances. But the young conductor may be quite sure that when such

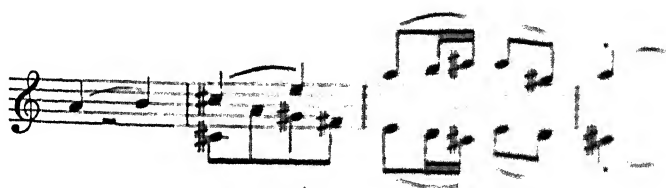


a thing has once occurred to him, and he has taken such notice of it as to prove that he has quick perceptions and a strong will, it will not happen again. Once past this ordeal a clever musician will find that English orchestral players are among his most loyal friends, and even with the very limited time granted for rehearsal, he can obtain effects of beautifully proportioned tone which will perhaps do more to delight the same part of the audience than all the violent contrast by which the vulgar conductor seeks to make himself famous. The mere question of proportion among the various tone-qualities of the orchestral instruments is one which a lifetime is hardly enough to deal with thoroughly; the treatises on orchestration may usefully be studied but it is experience alone that can make a conductor perfectly certain how much support should for instance, be given by the strings to a passage for clarinet solo, and how much to one for an oboe. Part of the fascination of orchestral work is due to the acoustic paradoxes that are involved. The prominence, for instance, that the harp, one of the feeblest of solo instruments, acquires in an orchestra, the mellowing and even softening effect obtained by increasing the number of violins—these are but two out of many perplexing

anomalies with which the expert conductor must become familiar; but they belong to the technical rather than to the artistic side of his studies almost as much as do the questions of beating time with or without a stick, or determining the place of the odd beat in a bar of quintuple time. More closely allied to the topic with which I am dealing is the strange kind of magnetic power which all the great conductors exercise over their orchestras. This seems to be the highest development of the musical temperament, and it is hard not to accept it as belonging to the sphere of things that are called 'occult', so difficult is it to explain or account for. The fact remains that without some portion of this power no conductor ever attained great heights. In the case of the man who must always remain as the perfect type of conductor *par excellence*, Hans Richter, this faculty was exerted in a guise of irresistible attraction. Every one felt bound to do his best, and it will be within the experience of many that in obeying his commands the individual found himself surpassing all his previous efforts. Players under him were like happy tribhys under a beneficent Svengali.

But the discussion of hypnotic suggestion lies outside the scope of this book; we must return

to the special points in which true excellent ensemble can be reached in an orchestral performance. It so happens that Schubert's great symphony in C major contains two passages which illustrate the different sides of the conductor's qualities in regard to ensemble: the opening notes be taken too slowly, a wish to be impressive at all costs, resumption at the close of the movement be apt to become ridiculous, for they must stand in their true relation to the rest, so the straining after effect at the opening defeat its own object. This, and the determination of a regular inflexible rate of speed in the finale, are examples of the conductor's more rudimentary function, that of regulating the pace of the music. But in the slow movement the proper balance among the intertwining melodies is by no means easy to attain, especially in a short passage beginning at the end of the movement (just before letter C), where the oboe and bassoon have the following:



The same delicious idea occurs again at bar 85, with the lower theme given to the violoncello. On this later occasion the lower theme has a *cres.* and *dim.* marked on the four quavers of its first bar. Now, unless this theme is well brought out, it is very apt to escape attention; yet it is after all only a counterpoint to the main theme above it, and however emphatic it is allowed to become it must never obscure the upper theme. Here is a case where individual taste must be the ultimate judge, and it is perhaps allowable to point out that at the first occurrence of these bars, where the lower theme is given to the bassoon, the penetrating tone of that instrument is pretty sure to carry it through, but that at the second occurrence the violoncello must make it relatively more prominent, as is suggested by the marks of expression being given only there. The marking of the last two notes quoted will prevent the occurrence of a blunder which is apt to wreck many a performance of classical works. Players of stringed instruments are taught to disguise the change in the direction of the bow as much as possible for the sake of smoothness; this leads them to be careless in the matter of distinctness when two identical notes are to be played so as to show that they are two, although

there is no appreciable interval of time between them. Many a performance of Beethoven's pianoforte concerto in E flat has lost its effect because at the fifth bar of the *tutti* subject of the first movement the last two notes have



insufficiently detached from each other, so that they sound as if they were tied together, to the detriment of the rhythm of the passage.

The great orchestral works in the classical repertory differ from each other very widely in the amount of passages they contain which require anything that can be called ensemble. As the masters of orchestration, and certainly those who excel in that art without having much to say that is worth hearing, require the attention of the audience in this regard, since the tones of the various instruments are so adroitly blended in their works that it is enough merely to play the notes in the prescribed time for the proper effect to be realized. There is hardly a bar of Beethoven or Liszt, for instance, that needs this so detailed care, for both these men, loving

instruments as they did, gave them nothing to play that was not easy to bring out into the required degree of prominence. The truly classical composers need far more, from the fact that with them the matter is always more weighty than the manner, the thought than its presentment.

### BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONY IN C MINOR, OP. 67

It will be useful to make a rapid survey of one of the greatest of all orchestral works, merely from the point of view of ensemble. Conductors are so anxious to invent new readings of Beethoven's C minor symphony—just as every actor thinks it necessary to make a new reading of Hamlet—that certain details, which rightly belong to ensemble, are apt to get overlooked. In the first movement of the symphony the dialogue of single minims between wind and strings at bars 71 ff. after the double bar, must be made clear to every hearer by the attainment of a perfect balance between the two. The same thing applies to the passage 58 bars before the end of the movement where the wind phrase is answered by the strings. In the 50th bar of the slow movement, the long-held clarinet notes must be perfectly proportioned, and the forte

*Allegro  
con brio.*

*Andante  
con moto.*

must dwindle to a real, unobtrusive accompaniment to the melody played by the viola. At bar 90, where the bassoon provides the base for the strings, the violoncello being busy marking the rhythm on reiterated E naturals, the basses need not interpret the mark *pp* too literally, they must give adequate support to the strings. Later on, where they and the clarinets lead the upward octave jumps answering each other, great care must be taken to ensure their equality of phrasing and force. The famous passage for violoncellos and double basses at the opening of the trio of the scherzo has been a difficult problem to many conductors of every broad taste. Of course at the pace it suits the rest of the movement, the passage must produce an effect of hurry, and several expedients have been tried to overcome this. One English conductor, many years ago, occupied a considerable part of a rehearsal for a Philharmonic concert in polishing up the passage till it lost all its roughness which is surely its most individual feature. M. Lamoureux allowed his double-basses to play with violoncello bows, and paid for the delicate finish he obtained by a sad loss of vigour and masculinity.

To deal with the places in Schumann's music

which require a master of ensemble to bring out their full beauty would take far too long; in spite of occasional touches of genius like the trombones in the 'Rhenish' symphony, the greater part of his orchestration is scarcely worthy of the noble ideas it clothes. It is always a cause for censure when a man lays profane hands on another man's work, but if ever the process of re-scoring could be justified, it would be in the case of Schumann. The story of the laughable effect of the opening notes of the horn at the beginning of the B flat symphony, and his strange guitar-experiment in the romance of the D minor symphony, are well known, and some admirers of his have been tempted to wish that he had not followed the ornamental form of the solo violin figure in the movement last named to be played simultaneously with the simple form of the same figure on the accompanying violins, or that he could sometimes allow the violins a little more rest. It is in work like his that a judicious abridging of one part as compared with another may most usefully be undertaken, and that a conductor accustomed to a good ensemble in other departments of music can do the most good. There can be no doubt that the lamentable inferiority of public performances of Schumann's



orchestral works is due to their shortcoming in this respect, for conductors who are cognizant of no merit in music but that of brilliant schemes are hardly ever tolerant of the workmen with whom colour is not everything. To the same cause is to be ascribed the curious infrequency of performances of the great symphonic Brahms, for in days when colour counts for everything, such masterly drawing as his is apt to a little discredited in comparison. Partly for this reason, but mainly because the work is one which bears the minutest study, and repays, perhaps better than any other symphony, the detailed investigation of its ensemble, I have chosen a third of his symphonies for analysis.

#### BRAHMS'S SYMPHONY IN F MAJOR, OP. 90

*Allegro  
con brio.*

The initial problem for the conductor is to determine the relative importance to be given to the 'motto' of three rising notes, and to the first subject of the first movement proper, the 'passionato' descending phrase given out by the violins. This must, of course, be passionate enough to bear the weight of the phrase, though not to obscure the three leading notes of the motto, which must always be brought out prominently, as by the wind in bars 11-13. At bar 15 the three reiterated crotchets must be

as neatly detached by the strings as they are on the wood-wind. The theme in A played by the clarinet is capable of the most exquisite 'modelling', as those who have heard Mühlfeld play it can well remember. At letter C the detached chords may be taken with such deliberation that the actual tempo may seem to be drawn back. At the return of the six-four time the 'motto' depends on the first oboe, and the descending arpeggios for flutes and bassoons must be well balanced. Two bars after letter D there comes the problem, 'Shall we join the half-phrases allotted to the second and first flute and bassoons respectively, and to the second and first violins in octaves with them, so exactly that no solution of continuity shall be felt?' I think certainly not, but it is easy to separate the two halves so sharply that the break may be too prominently exhibited. The passage is one that demands special attention, and one which severely tests a conductor's powers of orchestral ensemble.

In the slow movement, a bar before letter H, *Andante* the violas, having uttered the 'motto' theme in an emphatic way, although *pianissimo*, must be allowed to play their last pair of semiquavers with some slight freedom; but at the moment, the oboes are beginning their lovely ornamentation

of semiquavers, and the three which precede the bar on which letter B stands must be a little delayed in starting, so as to be taken up in strict time. The theme which starts at letter C in the clarinet and bassoon parts accompanied by pairs of chords in the strings, is so full of poetical significance that the amount of separation between the first two notes can hardly be considered too much in detail; it is easier for the wind soloists to do it right than for the strings, who will almost certainly want to make them sound as tied notes, or else to divide them from each other so sharply as to make them a mere commonplace figure of accompaniment. At bar 7 before letter D the full meaning of the pairs of chords is revealed, the passage, and its recurrences, being the most mysterious point in the symphony. The wonderfully passionate climax at letter P is one of the things that may be said to 'play itself'; no violinist is worth his salt who is not moved by it to express all that is in him, and from this to the end of the movement all is easy to make clear, if only the conductor will use no restraining influence under the impression that the work must be played in a 'classically cold' way.

The Allegretto, one of the loveliest things in music, is not easy to get well-balanced; the open-

*Poco  
allegretto.*

ing violoncello theme, marked *mezza voce*, must come out with proper dignity and grace, the violins must divide their triplets with perfect accuracy, the rhythm must be held together by the sedate motive of the violas, and the *pizzicato* notes of the double-basses must on no account be too soft. The first bassoon, taking the sedate figure from the violas in bar 14, must control the airy triplets that are now transferred to the second violin and viola. These triplets, wherever they appear, must gleam through the fabric but be in quite a subordinate position to the rest. After the change of signature, the passage in even quavers that rises to its climax of expression three bars before letter E is easy in ensemble, but many conductors seem afraid lest its robust texture should overpower the daintiness of the principal theme.

In the finale, the curious colouring that is given *Allegro*. by the bassoons must condition the pace and style of phrasing; the theme must sound a little laborious, as if it carried a weight of meaning, like some simple, austere ballad. The arpeggios divided between the violoncellos and the violas, bar 8 ff., may be as even as they can, and of course the little *diminuendo* mark over those in the first bar is supposed to apply to the whole passage.

At letter A the chords must be divided exactly as in the corresponding place in the slow movement, from which this is obviously derived. The two bars after letter B, and the similar passage to which they lead, with their new statement of the theme as it were in skeleton, can hardly be too rough in effect, and the rhythm of crotchet, quaver-rest, and quaver may be made even more 'pointed' than is expressed, the last quaver being excusably shortened by an infinitesimal amount. When the even motion of crotchets is resumed, six bars before letter C, the wind instruments may be encouraged to make as much of it as they can, so as to introduce the swinging subject in C major with its contradictory rhythm as effectively as possible. The repeated chords on the wind and violin at letter I are of course an allusion to those in the slow movement, and the rushing quaver-triplets which now begin in the lower strings to the figure in the Allegretto. All now is straightforward till we come to letter N, where the wonderful coda is prepared by the ominous version of the main theme in the violins. The semi-quaver groups just before letter O must not be made too prominent at first, or indeed until the change of key and the direction *un poco sostenuto*, when they must rival in importance the theme

play  
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played with by the wind instruments. This figure is that of the pairs of repeated chords now divide the interest between them, and of marvelous power is the climax at bar 12 after letter P. In the course of the semiquavers dying away, the exquisitely subtle allusion in the violin part to the theme of the first movement must not be too much emphasized. If the notes are played clearly, they may be trusted to come out; and if so played will reach the ears that are fitted to hear it.

## CHAPTER II

### CONCERTED CHAMBER MUSIC

No apology is needed for the length of the following chapter, for it is in Chamber Music that the qualities of ensemble are most clearly seen and are most valuable. If it could be played without any attempt at ensemble, the whole stretch of Classical Music, from Haydn to Brahms would lose all its meaning. There is concerted music in which a good ensemble is not absolutely necessary, but none in which it is out of place. I have already referred to the fact that in much of the early music, before Bach, the delicate art which we call ensemble is a good deal less urgently needed than it is in the classical period. Besides the absence of marks of expression, there is another proof that the main thing in the mind of the early composers was the web of sound not its detailed adornment by means of varying degrees of force or prominence. The early 'suonate da camera' of Italians like Bassani, Corelli, and the rest, and the sonatas of three or four parts by Purcell, depend on the interlacing

of the various parts rather than on the relative tone employed by each instrument, or on the prominence given to each in turn. They are felt contrapuntally, and the course of each part is quite easily traced by the ear without any special effects of light and shade apart from occasional 'echo' devices. It must also be remembered that in all these compositions it was a matter of indifference how many instruments were used; the presence of the violoncello, for instance, was often more or less optional where there was some keyed instrument, organ or harpsichord, to give the bass part. An instance of this indifference is in the titles of Purcell's two books of sonatas, for those entitled 'of three parts' are for precisely the same combination of instruments as those 'of four parts'. Occasionally, it is true, the 'four-part' sonatas show a short passage of independent movement for the violoncello, but as a general rule, it does not seem to matter very much whether there are two violins and harpsichord, or two violins, violoncello, and harpsichord. The fact that the harpsichord and organ, the universal instruments of accompaniment in the period, were incapable of any increase or decrease of tone excepting by mechanical means, may very well have led the composers to disregard contrasts and



gradations of tone such as are of the essence of the instrumental ensemble. Even in Bach's sonatas for violin and clavier, and his trios for two violins and clavier or for violin, flute, and clavier, it is possible to give quite a satisfactory interpretation by mere straightforward execution of the parts, for itself. For the most part, either the instruments are moving contrapuntally, or else it is an obvious figure of accompaniment which requires to be kept in the background of the picture. As long as the players agree upon the same interpretation of the ornaments which abound in the old music, little more is required.

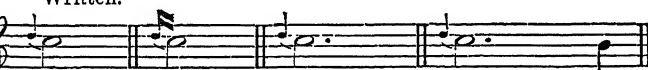
On one occasion Joachim was playing to Mme Arabella Goddard the sonata of Beethoven in G, Op. 96; mindful of the sound saying 'without a turn there is no proper shake', he en-

<sup>1</sup> The interpretation of the principal ornaments does, strictly speaking, belong to the subject of this book; but the uncertain state of our modern practice in this regard cannot be too often insisted upon that the rules laid down in Türk's *Klavierschule oder Anweisung*, &c., 1789, are the best possible guide to the proper execution of such things as the appoggiatura and the acciaccatura. The latter, represented by a small note with a stroke across it, should be played as nearly as possible at the same time with its principal note; the appoggiatura, in almost all cases, has a conventional value. The small note, whatever its share or apparent value, robs the large note which it precedes of half its value; in the case of a dotted note, the prin-

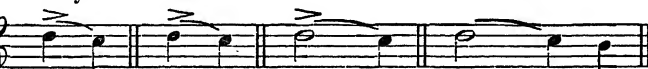
he shake on the first note with the usual turn ;  
 he pianist, following the then new tradition of  
 certain German schools, played the corresponding  
 phrase immediately afterwards without a turn.  
 In the repetition of the first half of the move-  
 ment, Joachim, with characteristic politeness,  
 adopted his colleague's interpretation, and gave  
 the first note without a turn ; she, full of rever-  
 ence for the great man, had made up her mind  
 to follow his phrasing, and had not time to  
 change her purpose at the moment, so that the  
 repetition of the phrase by the two instruments  
 was still as far as ever from agreement.

note loses two-thirds of its value to the ornamental note.  
 nus

Written.



Played.



each, it is true, does not adopt this convention with entire  
 uniformity, but in his instrumental compositions his prac-  
 tice seems to be far more uniform than elsewhere. The  
 older men, and the early classics, such as Haydn, Mozart,  
 and Beethoven (down to the end of his middle period), obey  
 the rule quite strictly, and even as far down as Chopin and  
 Rossini it is to be distinctly traced.

While the older compositions require little of the special art of ensemble, it is curious that the very modern concerted works seem almost as independent of it as these. It is difficult to find examples where a hint may be given to the young performer, perhaps because the technical difficulties are so great that only an accomplished player can cope with them, and partly because experienced players will have gone through the classical works and learnt how to obtain a good ensemble before they attack these later compositions. It is not impossible that the absence of any special need for the art of concerted playing may have something to do with the fact that certain virtuosi whose steady avoidance of the classics can hardly be accidental, are fond of playing Bach and the extreme moderns in the same programme.

As a general rule the early classics, from Haydn to the early Beethoven, are very simple in the matter of ensemble. The melodic phrases must of course stand out wherever they occur, and the figures of accompaniment recede in force and more specially in interest. There is one slight matter in these compositions, which may be noticed in every trio of Haydn and in most of Mozart's, that the violoncello has often nothing

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to do but to play in unison with the bass of the pianoforte. At such times it is for the pianist to lessen the force of his own bass, making that bass more prominent whenever the violoncello is set free to give some melodic phrase. This is such a simple matter that one would be ashamed to refer to it were it not that it is so very often disregarded by professional players as well as amateurs. Another commonplace of concerted music, as it may almost be called, is when a new theme, or an old one resumed, enters just before the termination of a phrase that has a natural *ritardando* at the close. A typical instance is in Schumann's quartet for piano and strings, in the slow movement where the theme comes back, thirty bars after the return of the B flat signature; here there is a very appropriate and elegant slackening of the first two notes of the theme, which coincides with the dying down of the *rallentando* in the other parts; but often the entering theme has to be taken up at the normal speed, notwithstanding the *rallentando* elsewhere, where it is necessary to delay the entry of the new theme so as to prevent the necessity for slackening it at its beginning. These are, of course, points in which a very little common-sense is needed to make all go smoothly; only common-

sense is so rare a virtue with many musicians that the detail seems worth pointing out.

[ A good ensemble, in the matter of tone quality is of course most readily obtained in works where different kinds of instruments are employed. Most pieces for clarinet and strings, or for flute or oboe in combination with other instruments may be said to make their own ensemble, since the ear can always trace without difficulty the course of a theme given out by any of the usual mediums. The pianoforte, with all its inherent defects, has become so necessary a part of the equipment of music that it is hardly realized as having a very individual tone and character of its own; in works in which it is associated with other instruments it is well to notice where it is used in contrast to the others and where it is supposed to unite with them. In trios and quartets, and perhaps most often in quintets, the strings join together in a kind of dialogue in which the piano is the opposing party when this is the case the pianist has a right to an increased freedom of delivery in nearly all cases.

There is no denying the supremacy of the string quartet as a vehicle for perfect ensemble music. Even if it is often supposed to be harder

to listen to and to understand than other music (and no one need be ashamed of feeling it to be so, since even Mme Schumann confesses that she found it difficult to enter into such chamber music at first), it is not really difficult to accustom the ear to follow the course of the four parts with their uniformity of tone-quality. Equally beyond dispute is the assertion that the ideal players of quartet music were the members of the Joachim-quartet; for the illustrious leader had the power of making clear exactly what he wanted in the way of readings, and his gracious personality kept the party free from the jealous bickerings that usually split up even the most perfect combinations of players. Mme Schumann says of the organization: 'It needs four artists of the first rank who shall have given a quarter of their lives to it, and how can that ever come about again? When will another artist like Joachim, who is the soul of it all, be born again?' There is plenty of evidence in the correspondence between him and Brahms to show how he worked to attain this wonderful result; a specially striking instance is that which concerns the violoncello opening of Brahms's string quintet, Op. 111. Joachim foresaw that the work could not always have the advantage of the

participation of Robert Hausmann, whose sonorous tone enabled him to execute the soaring phrase of the beginning in proper relation to the other players; he therefore suggested to Brahms that the upper strings should be marked *mezzo piano* instead of *forte* to give violoncellists of more moderate accomplishment a chance of being heard. The composer did not adopt the suggestion, but it is quite clear that he permitted the slight modification to be made in practice. (See the *Briefwechsel zw. Brahms und Joachim*, Band ii. 239-42.) A similar modification, this time of pianoforte tone, is suggested by Mr. T. F. Dunhill in his admirable treatise on Chamber Music (Macmillan & Co.), p. 179, to be made in Mendelssohn's *Variations Concertantes*, where in the fifth variation both pianoforte and violoncello are marked *ff*, the latter pizzicato. Mr. Dunhill directs the pianist here to 'moderate his transports'.

The famous arpeggio passages in Brahms's double concerto, Op. 102, were so deftly managed by Joachim and Hausmann, for whom the work was written, that there was no break in the transition from one instrument to the other, but the arpeggios sounded as if played on one huge instrument. Less thoughtful players are apt

make the arpeggios each for himself, as if the use in each instrument had to be finished off; could be passed over to the other player in an complete state, not finished off with a slur over part separately. As an instance of Joachim's of working and of his rooted objection hard-and-fast readings, I may be allowed to e from personal experience. I had the our of accompanying him many years ago he Hungarian Dance of Brahms in D, where violin has a long pause on the second note; him said to me, 'Use your judgement, and e in with the bass note as soon as you have enough of my pause.'

Most of the larger combinations of instruments ent fewer difficulties of ensemble than the etets and quintets of which I have been speak- the sextet, of which two admirable examples among Brahms's best-loved works, allows interchange of the kind of dialogue employed, e either the instruments can obviously be aped as three pairs, or two groups of three; Septet of Beethoven has so many different ities of tone that the playing of each part iciently gives quite a good result; and the ts of Schubert and Mendelssohn are for the t part quite straightforward works in which



there can be little doubt as to the relative importance of the parts.

I have thought it worth while to go through certain well-known works of chamber music in detail, pointing out the special places where questions of ensemble present themselves. It has naturally been very difficult to choose representative works for this purpose, for almost every classical composition has many points of interest for the ensemble player, and it seems absurd to feel compelled to limit oneself to one of Beethoven's violin sonatas and one of the immortal quartets. Of the former, the 'Kreutzer' has seemed the best for my purpose, since it is so much the most frequently played; and among the latter, I have preferred to take one of the quartets of the period intermediate between six early quartets and the 'Rasoumovsky' set on the one hand and the 'posthumous' quartets on the other. Definite recollection of supreme performances has dictated the choice of Schumann's quintet and of Brahms's quintet for clarinet and strings; and I am bold enough to hope that the player who works through these analyses will find it interesting and amusing to apply to other compositions the principles I have tried to enunciate.

BEETHOVEN'S SONATA IN A FOR PIANOFORTE  
AND VIOLIN, Op. 47

Various circumstances have combined to make this the most famous of all sonatas for piano and violin; its technical difficulty—which happens to have been a good deal exaggerated by virtuosi and teachers—its obvious brilliance, the honeyed sweetness of its theme and variations, had made it a universal favourite for many years before Tolstoi discovered in it a number of qualities which make it morally undesirable. It is fortunate, perhaps, that neither he nor any one else has quite gone to the length of issuing a 'bowdlerized' edition, and that, though it is bad for the very young to study, it is not so pretty certain that the very young have seldom the requisite skill to perform it. In the matter of ensemble, it is as easy as most sonatas for the same combination; where there are only two performers on the stage, it is clear that there are only three possible positions in relation to each other which they can possibly occupy. A may be in front of B, B in front of A, or they may both be equidistant from the footlights. So in music for violin and piano of the older kind. In Mozart, for example, the merest tiro can see without being told whether his part contains a melody

which should be made prominent or an accompaniment that must be kept in the background. Throughout this, as in most sonatas of the kind, there is very seldom any possibility of making a mistake on this point; but as an illustration of my meaning, it will perhaps be well to go through the sonata and note where the instruments in turn acquire the principal importance. The arpeggio opening on the violin must be as full of meaning as the player can make it, and when the piano takes up the phrase, it must be given with a richer sonority so that the hearers should be made to feel for the moment that the piano is the superior instrument of the two. The first piano chord should perhaps be very slightly spread, but by the end of the bar all feeling of arpeggio should have passed away. The little pairs of isolated semiquavers in the second half of the introduction must be carefully managed; the second of each pair must be quite short, and only the very smallest amount of *rallentando* is to be permitted before the double-bar. Although the violin has to play the last of his repeated pairs *pianissimo*, it must have in it the sense of what is to come in the *presto*, and it must be felt as a definite prophecy of the theme of that movement. The alternation of importance

*Adagio  
sostenuto.*

*Presto.*

tween the two instruments is here quite obvious; the piano flourish may be taken freely, and the concluding bass note should be the climax of the whole. Over the long passage of quavers which follows the flourish there is no slur marked, except occasionally in the violin part; where the violin plays the quavers over two strings, it will be found that one note does not cease to sound as soon as the other is played, and this must be the effect intended at on the piano.

The sustaining pedal is of course the obvious mechanical way of obtaining the effect, but for the thing, it has been definitely indicated for the flourish alone, and it would seem as if Beethoven had not wish it to be used in the succeeding part; for another, it is difficult to manipulate it quickly enough in such places as bars 11, 12, 15-24, after the pause, without losing clearness. The difference will be too marked if the pedal is used for the first bars and not for these. The semibreve subject is of course mainly for violin, but it should be solemn and not too passionate in both and not too emotional; the turn in its fifth bar must be done very deliberately, almost as follows:

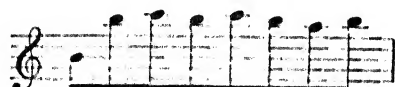


When the piano takes up the melody, the prominence of the sustained E's on the violin must increase throughout the eight bars, as it eventually becomes the most important note, at the Adagio bars.

The pianoforte turn must be modelled exactly on that of the violin. At the *tempo primo* the contrast between the *piano* notes and the *forte* can hardly be exaggerated. When the ensuing quavers stop, and the theme in E minor enters in the piano part alone, there must be as much *élan* as the player can command. The more distinctly the idea of gallantry is in the player's mind, the more will he be able to slacken the pace without losing brilliance. Notice, too, that each of the quavers at the ends of the bars, which are slurred on to the main notes of the theme, are here on the black keys, so that it is easy to slide the finger and thumb to the white keys immediately next them; this gives a special feeling of exhilaration, and that it is the way in which Beethoven meant it to be played is clear from the beginning of the 'working-out' section, where it is mainly on white keys altogether and where, in consequence, the quavers are single notes, not octaves.

After the return to the *reprise*, where the theme is brought in again in A minor, there is only one

the quavers on a white note, and this must be taken as smoothly as it can, in the hope that the sole incongruity will escape notice. To return to the first occurrence of this passage, the violin pizzicato chords must carry out the 'gallant' suggestion of the melody, in which the shake may be taken as follows:



The repetitions of the theme in contradiction between the violin and the pianist's left hand must be brought out with due excitement, and from here to the double-bar there must be an increasing and almost dramatic importance up to the pause before the double-bar itself, where the last bar of the violin's quavers may be slightly drawn back. Thirty-five bars after the double-bar the passages of broken thirds and sixths, beginning on the piano, must always be phrased from the second crotchet of each bar to the corresponding place in the next. In most editions, while the piano part is left unphrased, the violin part has a slur over the whole contents of each bar, whereas it is clear that the phrase goes with that of the piano. Where these broken sixths come

down in the piano part to the key of D flat, the whole character of the 'gallant' theme must be changed into one of plaintive supplication. Not very far on from this point there is a *ritard.* and a pause ; counting thirteen bars before that pause the piano must take the subordinate position (except for the little phrases in the bass), while the violin has a new form of the initial theme of the movement which must be brought out strongly, despite the *piano* enjoined. From this point all is virtually repetition until we come to the coda, where at eighty-three bars before the end of the movement the violin sustains a long B flat, which, with its successors, must be held without the slightest attempt at expression until the unisonous resumption of the theme ; under these held notes the piano has a mysterious quaver figure, in which the same kind of excessive *legato* must be attempted that was used at the beginning of the *presto*. In the little final *adagio*, first with the violin and then without, the richest effects of which the piano is capable must be obtained, and notice that here again the pedal is expressly enjoined.

*Andante*  
*con varia-*  
*zioni.*

The theme of the *Andante* is so minutely phrased by the composer that nothing but an ultra-careful fulfilment of the marks can be

desired in the performers. The shake in the seventh complete bar is executed thus:



and the same division of the shake will be made by both instruments in bar 15, &c. In bar 26 it is to be observed that although the indicated turn after the shakes is no longer written in, it is to be exactly in conformity with its predecessors, as is made clear from a comparison of the corresponding place in the violin part ten bars before the end of the theme. The first variation is for the piano, the violin making its birdlike comments with the utmost delicacy. Here the piano shake may be taken without a final turn, though such a turn can never be out of place, and must always give an additional touch of elegance to the interpretation. The *pralltrillers* in the last four bars of the first half are not easy to do gracefully. The best execution of them is this:



As far as possible there should be through this variation a feeling of springing lightness, and the



pianist need not despair because the violinist must necessarily outdo him in this quality in the next variation. All that the pianist has to do here, beyond the proper placing of his chords to the exact phrasing of the violinist, is to give a good legato in the left-hand part in bars 6-7 of the second half of the variation. Happily those days are past when the players used to be obliged to wait for a round of applause, when the violinist got up to his highest notes, before repeating the second half. The third variation, in which the share of both players is about equal, must suggest that the instruments have been treated with the finest oil; I have heard the violin part sound as if a great deal of inferior grease had been used but this is not what I mean. In this part there should be next to no *portamento* until the semi-quavers two bars before the double-bar. A special difficulty lies before the careful pianist, for just in the bar where he most needs the help the pedal can give him (bar 5) it is implied that Beethoven does not mean to give it him, since he directs the pedal to be used in the next following bar, in order, no doubt, to emphasize the harmony. The thing cannot be unintentional, as it recurs at the close of the variation. The turn in the first bar of variation four on the piano, and in bar 9 for

the violin, has to be the same ornament, though expressed differently in the two places. It should be thus :



in both places. The chains of shakes which occur in both parts throughout the variation are better without the turn. Where the movement calms down towards the little *molto adagio* not far from the end, the pianist may make his demisemi-quaver scale a little slower, so as to introduce the chords that are marked *dolce ed espressivo*. The bar of the *molto adagio* is of course quite free throughout, and the execution of the whole bar will test the sound artist's powers. The turn should be taken quite deliberately, the bass note *sforzando* should have a minute space after it before the chord with the pause over it is played; there should be no distinction made between the demisemi-quavers in large print and the descending quavers in small type; the whole passage must have the utmost gravity and poetry at the same time. The violin shake after the *tempo primo* is of course to be provided with its turn, and so is its shake eighteen bars before the end.

In the following bar (seventeen from end) the pianist must notice that the left-hand quaver supported by the pedal, has to provide the base of a crotchet chord marked *tenuto*; this and the following chords must be actually held down by the fingers, and the utmost attention must be paid to the change of the pedal at the change of harmony. The usual practice taught by the most thorough masters is not to take up the foot until the moment when the second chord is being struck, and to put down the foot a fraction of a second after the striking of the chord. At the start of the finale both parts are of equal importance, the groups of three quavers not perhaps quite so much so as the rest; at the *fortissimo* in both parts, leading to the second subject, the quaver A sharps may be a little delayed and then made shorter, so as to give a kind of 'bite' on the B's in both instruments. The danger of making these quavers too short is that dignity may be sacrificed and the movement become flippant; if they are taken too accurately as the exact third part of their triplet, there is a risk of sacrificing its inherent energy. The points of repose are of course the little sections in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, and these can hardly be made too full of meaning. Even more impressive than these is the short

*Presto.*

*agio* passage that comes twice over not far from the end. Care must be taken also to show that the second subject of this movement is derived directly from the 'gallant' subject of the first movement, and it is interesting to see how Beethoven anticipates here the usage of later composers, who are fond of joining their movements together in this way.

# BEETHOVEN'S SONATA FOR PIANOFORTE AND VIOLIN IN G, Op. 78

The special feature of this sonata is the recurrence of its opening phrase of three repeated notes in all its movements. The violinist must adopt a phrasing for them which will suit the group wherever it comes. The first two are to be 'lifted' and the third generally begins a *legato* phrase. The 'lift' of the first two notes is an important feature in the development of the theme, and although it is obviously to be played with the utmost simplicity, it must be realized as full of poetical intention. The crossing rhythms which begin at bar 11 must be allowed to make their own effect, and the contradiction must not be made too emphatic. Where the piano has the 'lifted' notes the player must imitate the phrasing of the violin as nearly as possible. In the course

*Vivace ma  
non troppo.*

of the movement there appear directions which are not quite easy to interpret, though most of them mean a slackening of speed. The first *sostenuto* in the middle of p. 5 (bar 48) seems to indicate a slower rate taken up at once at the half-bar, and continued, without further slackening, through the following bar. At the bottom of the same page *un poco calando* (bar 57) is a gradual slackening and softening to the *a tempo*. The *ritenuto* at bars 68 and 69 may perhaps be treated as a slackening without an appreciable *diminuendo*. On p. 8 (bar 105) there occurs *poco a poco più sostenuto*, and the first words are spread out over the two bars in such a way that a *rallentando* is almost certainly indicated. The *sostenuto* goes on until the top of p. 11 (bar 153), where the words *poco a poco tempo primo* imply a slight *accelerando* through the bars over which the first words are spread out. At bar 21 before the end of the movement, the very strange direction occurs *in tempo poco a poco e crescendo*; it is difficult to guess how an Italian would interpret this, but we are happily not left in doubt, because the authoritative tradition of Joachim is maintained by all who play the sonata on his lines. A gradual restoration of the original time, through the three reiterated notes of the theme, with a rising

ensity of style rather than too strong a crescendo, may be taken as the intended interpretation, and if the right amount of this has been given, the repetition of the theme four bars after the bar referred to (bar 17 before the end), will be in strong dramatic contrast with the other movement. Of the usual difficulties of ensemble there are very few, as both instruments will readily find out when to take the front of the melody and when to become accompaniment. The *Adagio* and the finale must be very carefully adjusted to each other in the matter of pace; at a superficial glance it would seem that the slow movement should be exactly twice as slow as the *Allegro molto moderato*, because of the occurrence of the *adagio* theme at p. 26 of the finale. But, if a mechanical or metronomic relation is maintained between the two, part of the effect will be lost; for the speed of the finale may rightly be allowed to slacken off a very little to that of the *Adagio* played in notes of double the value. How much of the effect of the first theme of the *adagio* depends upon the beginning of the arpeggios in the left hand it would be hard to say, but certainly here is part of the secret of making the movement as poetical as it ought to be. The first note should be considerably louder than

its octave or the rest of the arpeggio, and a slight 'agogic' accent will not be out of place at this point. At the *più andante* where the pianist's right hand has the recurrence of the opening theme of the sonata, care must be taken to 'lift' the whole chord in the manner adopted in the first movement, and of course the direction means a little faster, not a little slower, than before. The section gets more vigorous as it goes on, until the violin calms things down with its more and more distinct allusions to the *adagio* theme, on the resumption of which the piano must fall into the subordinate place. The repetition of the vigorous theme on p. 20 is hardly perceptibly faster. At the repetition of the vigorous section, *pianissimo*, the pace is hardly hastened at all. The relations between the players in this movement give scope for any amount of artistic feeling they may possess, and the movement will test the powers of an ensemble player more accurately than many a more difficult piece.

*Allegro  
molto  
moderato.*

The 'lifted' notes of the first theme of all are again prominent in the finale, and here again the pianist must phrase them after the violin's pattern. His own characteristic semiquavers must be of course perfectly legato, but, as it were inside the big slur, there must be the sense of the notes

being in pairs. This will be given almost sufficiently by the change of finger at each repeated note. At the twenty-ninth complete bar (top of p. 23) the character changes to a plaintive melody supported by a light but by no means trivial accompaniment, and it is probable that at bar 45 a slight yielding of the time will be found desirable if the piano arpeggios are to come out clearly. The pairs of quavers must be strongly emphasized in the first of each pair by both instruments, as indicated by the accents. Page 26, at the change of key-signature, is the beautiful point where the theme of the *adagio* is brought in again. Just here, there will be no harm in slackening the pace slightly, for of course the pace of the *adagio* theme must exactly correspond with that of its own movement. The slackening of time on p. 30 down to *più moderato* will not be misunderstood, and it will generally be found that at this pace the piano's allusion to the *adagio* theme will be about right. Six bars before the end of the sonata, after two bars of *ritenuto*, no further slackening is required, but of course no resumption of the *tempo primo* is intended. There almost must be a minute 'easing-off' at the lovely cadence at the third bar from the end.



CÉSAR FRANCK'S SONATA IN A FOR PIANO  
AND VIOLIN

This sonata is not merely a most characteristic achievement of its composer's, but by a happy accident it is almost more often played in the present day than any work for the same instruments ; more than any other concerted work, too, it may be held to mark the ending of the classical period, to which it looks back in some points of its structure, while enjoying all the freedom of the more modern style that was the outcome of César Franck's career. Chronologically it of course precedes many works of undoubtedly classical form, for at the time of Franck's death Brahms had still seven years of life before him ; but it is so frank in expression, and so untrammelled by conventions of form, that while the ultra-moderns cannot sneer at it as stiff and formal, the classicists accept it as striking a fresh note while sacrificing nothing of clearness of outline. In the first movement, and indeed throughout the sonata, the violinist's chief duty will be to study very minutely the details of intonation ; where the strange chromatic experiments coincide with those of the piano, the tempered scale must naturally be borne in mind by the violinist ; but

where the piano is not playing the actual chromatic notes the violinist may give them in just intonation. At the opening, the four introductory bars for the piano will of course be given in a dreamy hesitating way in anticipation of the theme, which the violin should give with perfect regularity of rhythm, and in a quiet meditative style, making always a wide distinction between such notes as C sharp and C natural when they are adjacent to one another. The long pianoforte passage in the key of E must be full of passion, and not a note of the arpeggios in the bass must be deprived of its value. A slight dwelling on the 'unlikely' notes in the harmonies will assist the hearer's understanding. The descending passages soon after the violin re-enters must be made very prominent, though no accent is marked by the composer. At the bar marked *dolcissimo* where the first theme returns, the piano accompaniment may be quite subordinate, and the less the big chords have to be 'spread' the better. The whole movement should give an impression of a dialogue between virginal innocence and manly ardour. The passion that is felt in part of the first movement is fully kindled in the second, which is exceedingly hard to play, especially for the pianist. There are very few movements of

*Allegretto  
ben  
moderato.*

*Allegro.*

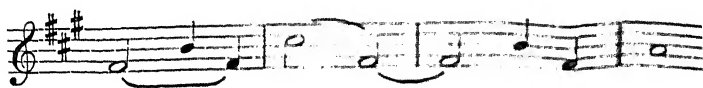
any date in which emotion of this kind is sustained so firmly throughout, and a certain amount of textual uncertainty and actual wrong notes may be forgiven if the players have the requisite amount of fire. Although the theme in F which succeeds the agitation of the first portion of the movement is of a calmer movement, yet there is in it a strong suggestion of undercurrents of feeling, and this may be suggested by the violinist. The very important theme which begins twenty bars after this point (*poco più lento, pp*) must be given without any hint of tremolo, and in this part of the section the pianist must give due prominence to those notes which have double tails and which carry melodic suggestions. At the *quasi lento* the piano chords may be slightly spread, and at *animando* the same unemotional delivery of the violin theme must be repeated. This theme only becomes fully outspoken in the piano part at the change to C sharp minor, where the arpeggios of the accompaniment are again of great importance, though if they are too weightily emphasized the theme above them will lose its continuity. The excited passage for violin marked *molto fuoco* can hardly be overdone in expression, and the greater the passion here the more striking may be the contrast when the words

*dolcissimo espressivo* occur and the violin accompanies the delivery of the theme that seems to express controlled passion. The end of the movement must be worked up at first by the violin by very gradual steps to the brilliant close.

The third movement gives a splendid opportunity to a competent violinist to show what he can do in a free style; the exact assessment of the value of each quaver of the cadenza at the beginning cannot be expressed or written down, but the passage carries its own phrasing to the mind of any player with a musical soul, who realizes that he may 'take the stage' here. At its close the piano, taking up the thread, by altering the B flat to a B natural turns the idea into an allusion to the opening of the first movement; due weight may be given to this transformation by a perceptible lingering just before the B natural is actually played in the top part, and the same thing holds good three bars afterwards in the other key. A mood of languor succeeds at the words *molto lento*, and from the close of the second cadenza the emotion is gradually worked up to the change of key-signature, where the triplets of the violin cadenzas give the suggestion for the pianoforte accompaniment; in the course of this

*Recitativo-  
Fantasia.*

passage the violin announces two themes or which much of the effect of the finale depends

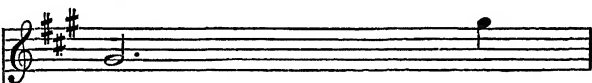


They must be in complete contrast with each other ; the first, marked *dolcissimo*, must steal in very quietly but yet must make itself felt, and the second, marked *dramatico*, is so heavily accompanied with an important figure in the piano that it may be given as emphatically as the player may desire (the theme given by each hand alternately in octaves must be well brought out). The secret of the provenance of the first is told after the violinist has been silent for four bars, when it appears in crotchets against the minims of the piano, and is recognized as a version of the opening theme of the sonata. In the same way the joyful theme of the finale, which is in canon during its entire delivery, is but another development of the same idea. The two descendants of the original theme run on together, for the little subject just referred to has to be given by the piano softly during some ornamental passages in the violin which must be kept under. Not long afterwards the two change functions, and the piano must keep down the ornamentation. In

*mf* *dramatico.*



*mf* largamente.



&c.



No. 10 must be given even more emphatically than before, and at the change to C major the descending scales, with their chiming effect, accompany the theme numbered 9, which now

comes out into full prominence. The resumption of the canonic theme must start very softly so as to give full room for working-up the climax of the whole work.

SCHUBERT'S TRIO IN B FLAT, OP. 99, FOR  
PIANO AND STRINGS

*Allegro  
moderato.*

In the first phrase (bars 1-5) the strings have little to do but play strongly and in exact time, giving to every note of the triplet its true value. It is to be observed that in bar 4, where the regular rhythm, hitherto kept up by the pianist's right hand, ceases, the beats of the bar are still kept quite prominently in the hearers' mind by pairs of slurred notes in the violin (bar 4, beat 4) and the violoncello (bar 5, beats 1 and 2). The pianist, while marking clearly the inflexible reiteration of the loud chords in the right hand, must yet subordinate that hand to the rhythmical figure in the left, which contradicts the smooth triplets of the strings. This 'dotted' rhythm is to be played in the most animated way possible, and the semiquaver must be mentally connected with the following, not the preceding, quaver. It must not, of course, be allowed to degenerate into a demisemiquaver, but there must be perceived a desire to shorten the value of the short

note and to lengthen that of the dotted quaver. Bars 4 and 5 must of course have no pedal. A smoother interpretation of the 'dotted' rhythm figure may be given by the violoncello in bar 9, and by both strings in bar 11; in these the length of the semiquaver may be slightly enlarged, so that it may begin a shade before its accurate place in the bar. On the other hand, in bars 12 (violin) and 13 (cello) where the semiquaver leads into the triplets it must be taken very short, and the triplets themselves must be delicately phrased. The dotted figure in the piano part in these and the following bars must be rhythmically the same as at first, the contrast between the two figures being made to culminate at the beginning of bar 18 on the chord of D major, after which observe that the sign for *crescendo* begins later in the piano part than in the strings, where, notwithstanding the continuance of the *forte*, the chromatic scale must suggest a stealthy movement. The sudden *piano* in bar 21, which should begin *after* the first note, must not be neglected, nor must the *diminuendo* on the rising chromatic scale in bar 22. The calm held chord in the strings warns the pianist not to make too vigorous a *crescendo* up to the E flat. At the resumption of the theme the violin must of course be subordinate to the



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other parts, but the *staccato* must be carefully observed; the piano part must be so interpreted that the opening note, B flat, must easily be construed by the ear as the end of the triplet passage and the beginning of the very sustained delivery of the theme. In bar 30 a certain amplification, both in time and strength, is suggested as the violoncello leads down to its bottom note, C. From this point to bar 62, where the violoncello enters on the high A in anticipation of the second subject, requires merely the application of the foregoing suggestions. The repeated A's of bar 63 must be well separated from each other, and the *crescendo* and *decrescendo* may be of considerable extent. During the announcements of the second subject, the pianoforte part is the slightest possible accompaniment, *pianissimo* but with the sustaining pedal at each change of harmony. In bar 65 the four changes of harmony demand the least perceptible slackening of the time. The turn (strings, bar 69, and piano, bar 78) is played thus :



bar 72, for the strings, which suggests a louder one than that of the subject just announced, must, though louder, be a great deal less prominent, as the piano part must come out properly. The little accent on the third beat, A, must in like manner be only very slightly emphasized in this and the next few bars, but that on the high C for violin in bar 81 must be played sensitively, notwithstanding the prescribed *pp*, and the violoncello phrase in bars 81-3 must have chief attention. The staccato scales in semiquavers, which enter at bar 83 and continue intermittently till the double-bar, must be made as brilliant as possible by all three players, and the *mf* quavers in the violoncello (bars 85-8) must be taken quite firmly and the tone of each a little 'pulled out', for this is the first occasion on which the violoncello has to support the harmony of the composition and be its real *base*. The dialogue between the left and right hand of the pianist at bar 94 must be strongly enforced, and the long *diminuendo* must not be exaggerated at first, as it must leave off at the blank bar as if it had become merely inaudible. The last bar before the double-bar will permit a slight retardation for the violoncello triplets to make their effect. (We start the numeration of the bars anew from the double-bar,

for convenience.) In the first phrase, string players who are acquainted with the truths of just intonation may be allowed to make the D flat a shade flatter than its place in the tempered scale, to emphasize the Schubertian change from major to minor. At bar 28 the triplet figure in the violin, which now first appears in conjunction with the second subject (it began its gracious career in bar 12 from the opening), must be made prominent, not by loudness, but by exquisite phrasing. The pianoforte bass in bar 31 will be slightly broadened, as will the violoncello triplets in bar 35, and the piano figure again in bars 39 and 43. The big crescendo that is to reach its climax at bar 54 must be prepared cautiously at bar 44 and the pianoforte figure must be unobtrusive but absolutely clear. From bar 64 the dotted rhythm returns and is again to be made as sharp and decisive as possible. Bar 80, the violoncello passage, begins its *ritenuto* on the fourth beat, but a slight anticipation of the slackening is not to be blamed on the beat before, and at the similar place in bar 91 the slackening must be greater and more deliberate than before. The violoncello cadence at bar 99 marks the important moment of the return of the first theme, and may be taken a little freely. When the second subject is about

to enter in the tonic key (bar 131) the violinist must make a separation of the repeated D's very clear, as the passage is not quite parallel with that in which the violoncello prepared the entry of this theme in the first part of the movement. At bars 171 and 172 is a special difficulty for the pianist, who must disguise the fact that in the former bar the scale is played by his two hands, in the latter by one in octaves. The conclusion of the movement may be left to the taste of individual players; the pianist must start his entry after the pause with perfect legato.

At the opening we find the accompaniment in the pianoforte part marked *p*, while the melody on the violoncello is marked *pp* with many accented notes. These must not be made too emphatic, as the accents are only meant to indicate the natural rhythm of the melody. A rich support must be given on the pianoforte (with the aid of the pedal), and the metrical accents must be delicately marked before the entrance of the theme. At the beginning of the short repeated section the new counterpoint to the theme must be well brought out by the violoncello, the violin taking the least prominent place of the three. At the third bar after the repeated section, where a new syncopated figure of accompaniment begins

*Andante  
un poco  
mosso.*

in C minor, careful measurement of the syncopations is necessary, and the 'agogic' accents on the first and fourth beats of the bar must be kept up first by the piano and then by the violoncello. These accents must be produced by the usual slight lingering on the beat, not by any extra force, which would tend to draw attention from the beautiful, impassioned melody in the piano part. In this rhythm the long note at the beginning of each phrase may be slightly prolonged, and where the two hands are in octaves, each pair of slurred demisemi-quavers must be almost detached from its neighbours. The staccato scales on the violin must be given with a 'springing bow', and be kept duly subordinate. At bar 12 after the double-bar, the piano has a descending arpeggio figure which soon acquires considerable importance. On the figure which begins in the violoncello part, ten bars from the end of the movement, the close of the section depends for its effect. Its first delivery must be very quiet, or the close will be exaggerated; no freedom must be allowed until the last four bars of the movement. In the penultimate bar, a slight slackening is permissible, as well as a slight emphasis on the semi-quaver phrase.

*Cherzo.*  
*Allegro.*

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of

phrasing the opening notes correctly. The last note of the phrase, F, is marked as the first of the bar by its accent, but if the three quavers are taken with mechanical equality, or if the slightest accent be put on the first, the ear is deceived into taking the movement for the first three bars as if it were in  $\frac{6}{8}$  time. There must be the smallest conceivable leaning on the second of the three quavers, C, in order to set the rhythm right at first. The accentuation of the fifth bar, as two pairs of staccato quavers, followed by a third pair of slurred notes, must be kept up more or less continuously through the movement. In the trio there is little room for error, as the piano part is a mere accompaniment which needs nothing more than the avoidance of too dry a style of playing the pairs of crotchets. If the player can feel that he would like to 'spread' the chords if he dared, and will then refrain from doing so, all will be well. Such chords are perfectly played when they are not quite even, either in time or strength, and when the third beat of the bar is made very slightly subordinate to the first. In the eight bars which lead to the return of the scherzo, they must be as unobtrusive as possible. The violoncellist throughout the trio will take his cue in phrasing from the violin.

*Rondo.*  
*Allegro.*  
*Vivace.*

This long movement may make the effect of a purely mechanical and forced gaiety, of a quadrille played by tired minstrels at the end of a ball, of a vulgar romp, or of a light-hearted nature with endless reserves of good humour and innocent fun. It all depends upon the way in which it is interpreted. To obtain the right results the opening must be taken quietly and almost sedately, and the value of the two quavers as against the first crotchet must be most accurately measured. Strict observance of the accents will help to keep the movement from 'running away'. From bar 27 the violoncello has one of the passages—so rare in this work—where it has to support the harmonies, so that the bass notes must be solid, held for their full value, and not made in any way 'interesting' or 'expressive'. The unison passage at bar 52 is one of the points at which the pace can be checked, and in view of the latter part of the movement, where it will no doubt be useful in this respect, it should be taken from this point with some slight feeling of holding back. Up to the change of time-signature all is straightforward, but when that change takes place there is a very great danger of letting the pace be far too fast. The rhythm is so like that

of the polonaise that it is almost inevitable that the pairs of quavers should be taken in a kind of 'gallant' style, almost thus :



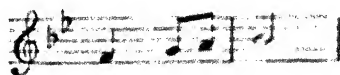
But if this is done, the result will be that the pace will be so quickened at each change of signature as to lead to hopeless confusion at the end. Great attention should be paid to the little accents on the first of each pair of rising quavers in all parts, and this will help to keep the movement within bounds, while preserving its lightness and gaiety. With the help of the unison passage



any undue quickening may be checked before the change back to  $\frac{2}{4}$  time, at which point the original speed must be regained. At the second occurrence of the  $\frac{3}{2}$  signature, the violin has the 'unison' passage just referred to, while the violoncello continues the 'dotted' figure which has been unheard for a long time. Here a very moderate rate of speed is demanded, and although



all three parts are marked *piano*, the violin must accentuate in such a way as to produce the effect of decisive rhythm. Above all things it is dangerous for the pianist to yield to the temptation to hurry at this point. The wonderful *diminuendo* before the final *presto* must be associated with no hint of a *rallentando*; one would even say that it is excusable to let the movement 'run away' from that place to the end. The little phrase



so constantly repeated by the stringed instruments alternately, must die away to nothing at all at the close, and must at the last be played in a perfectly unintellectual way, just tossed, as it were, into the air.

#### MOZART'S QUARTET FOR PIANO AND STRINGS IN G MINOR

*Allegro.*

The phrasing of the first two bars of this beautiful work will inform the experienced hearer of the kind of performance he is to hear. The duration of the staccato on the first note as compared with the duration of the other two notes in the first bar, and the amount of legato to be

stowed on the slurred notes in bar 2, are points  
 at must be settled beforehand if the interpreta-  
 tion is to be perfect. For, of course, in Mozart  
 every detail is of the utmost importance. I am  
 inclined to think that the first note, though *staccato*,  
 should be held almost for a full crotchet, and the  
 length of the other notes taken approximately  
 half their value. The slurred notes are easy  
 enough for the strings, who can make them as  
*staccato* as they like ; but the pianist must lay great  
 stress upon them, and play them in the manner  
 that is called *legatissimo*, that is, the second of the  
 notes must be played almost before the first has  
 been taken up. No pedal must be used for this  
 important opening phrase. The pace of the  
 movement may depend to some slight extent  
 on the kind of pianoforte employed. The  
 instrument of Mozart's day was of far lighter  
 quality than anything now in use ; and only the  
 most delicately adjusted pianos of the present day  
 can be relied on to give the passages quite clearly  
 anything like the original pace in rapid move-  
 ments. On a Broadwood or an Erard, the rapid  
 passages can be made clear at the pace which the  
 strings will desire ; but on one of the heavy  
 German pianos a far more deliberate speed must  
 be adopted. The shake in bar 4 must include

more than two repetitions of the principal note, ( and the pace of the movement must be



not



decided accordingly. It may be taken as a general rule throughout the work that pairs of slurred quavers are to be made as legato as possible, and in the upward leaps of an octave in these so-called passages the first note may certainly be kept down till after the second has been struck. The second should, as it were, spring into a brilliant staccato from the smoothness of the preceding note. At bar 9, the viola, though subordinate, must yet be very distinct. The semiquaver passage for piano alone, which afterwards becomes an accompaniment to the strings, has no marks of phrasing above it, but is not, for that reason, to be allowed to sound dull or trivial; there is not much time for delicate phrasings to be thoroughly realized, but if the player bears it in mind to 'think' the phrases thus, all will be well:



The next following semiquavers must be taken if each three were slurred, i.e. with a lifting-off the third of each group. Meanwhile the violin and viola must agree to take the ornamental note the second bar of their phrase as a true *acciaccatura*, i.e. the note must not take anything from the value of the following semiquaver. When the pianoforte semiquavers stop, the viola leads off the beautiful smooth phrase which, though marked *no*, must be full of meaning. The pianist during this little dialogue in the strings may make the last note of the main theme slightly less prominent than before, by prolonging it a very little, and he must be taken to give life to so important subject as this, all the more since the left hand of the piano part is here independent of the violoncello. It is one of the chief difficulties of an ensemble in the older compositions for piano and strings that both the violoncellist and the pianist are apt to forget whether they are playing in unison or separately. It seems fairly obvious that when the mere supporting bass is being played by both, there is no need to make it prominent in either, but that when there are two independent parts going on, the single bass of the harmonies must be made more prominent.

The turns in the viola and violin parts in the

two bars where the piano is silent should not begin with the principal note, but be interpreted thus :

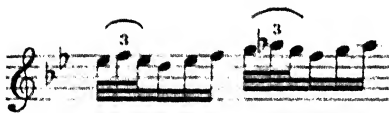


Two bars after this, the pairs of quavers, interchanged between the violin and viola on the one side and the piano on the other, must be again *legatissimo*, and a little pressure on the first of each is recommended. The little theme after the cadence in B flat is another of the things which is far easier to execute on the strings than on the piano, and therefore the piano, in giving it out must endeavour to imitate the strings' phrasing by anticipation. It is impossible to play the first few notes too legato, or the last too staccato. The second subject proper, which enters on the violin accompanied by the other strings, depends for its beauty upon the right execution of the *appoggiatura*, which must, of course, be played thus :



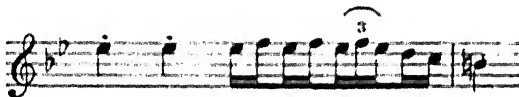
The tripping groups of two semiquavers and

quaver must be taken with a light-hearted spring which should suggest the step of a dancer. When the piano enters, the amount of emphasis laid on the appoggiatura note must be exactly echoed in the violin. The last of the piano's silent bars as, in the violin part, a little shake on the first of each of the last groups of semiquavers; these shakes are a mere turn, including only two repetitions of the principal note :

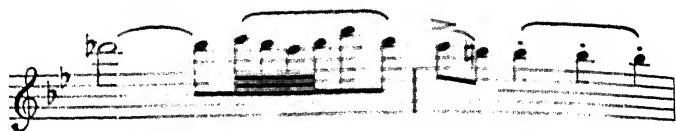


Just before the double-bar the *legatissimo* pairs of quavers must be made duly prominent, and in bars 3 and 4 after the double-bar momentary help may be given by the pedal. But it is essential to stop the vibrations of the instrument before the entry of the theme in C minor, the first note of which is not at all easy to manage so as to convey the dignity of the subject while obeying the *piano* direction.

In the bar after the two semibreve bars the shake should be taken thus, to bring out the rhythm of three crotchets :



and the strings must agree to do it in the same way ; bars 2 and 3 before the entry of the strings phrase thus :



When the violin has uttered this theme three times, it has to start a most important phrase, which leads back to the *reprise* of the opening theme. This, consisting of a minim followed by a semiquaver scale rising to the ninth above the starting-point, must be made quite emphatic, and, indeed, almost allowed to overpower the theme with the shake in it. It must acquire, during its progress to the resumption of the first subject, some of that gravity which may be called Mozart's royal prerogative. From this point it is hardly necessary to give detailed phrasings, as so much is merely recapitulatory. If all players keep their pairs of quavers as legato as possible they will give a good account of all that comes before the coda, at the double-bar. (It is not usual to repeat the second part of movement as well as the first.) The unison opening must of course be repeated exactly as at first ; but the solo passage for piano may be taken a little more

reely, and an infinitesimal pause may be made on the first of the high D's, so that when the ninth, E flat, is substituted for this note on the second recurrence of the phrase, an element of the fantastic may enter without seeming incongruous. In the broken chords which succeed to the little dialogue between the piano and the strings, the notes may be held down a little or the pedal very lightly used, so as to bring out the harmonies. The semiquavers in the last four bars may be robbed of a little of their value, so that they may sound 'pointed' and very crisp. The slow movement can hardly be played too simply, or with too much legato. The turn in bar 3, and elsewhere, is played thus :



In bar 8 a very slight slackening of the demisemiquavers to correspond with the direction *rescendo*, is excusable. In all these groups of semiquavers a strong agogic accent may be placed on the first note of each bar, and more especially on the initial note of each passage, in piano or violin. Bars 19-21 may be interpreted almost thus, and the same holds good of the violin part in bars 24 and 25 :





In bar 34 the piano must give full value to the *appoggiature*. Two bars after the piano starts the descending scale-passage the viola has a long-held C, which changes into a discordant note as a crescendo is made; born musicians will instinctively increase the amount of mental tension on this note as it goes on, even though no tremolo is admissible. The five bars (three of them for piano alone) which lead back to the first theme may be taken with a little more freedom than the rest. Twelve bars before the end of the movement, the theme reappears in an altered shape, the piano giving it out in syncopations which must be well brought out, and may rise in intensity and even in force through the repetitions of the note F.

*Rondo.*  
*Allegro.*

However carefully the beginning of the rondo is phrased by the pianist, he can never quite equal the staccatos and legatos of the strings, so that he must try to exaggerate the phrasing of his own solo. On the entry of the strings the left

and of the pianist may be kept under, as the bass is being given on the violoncello. After the close in G, the principal auxiliary subject, entering in the same key, is supported, in later editions, in the first chords of its first and second bars, with amplified harmonies which are quite in keeping. All the *appoggiature* in the next few bars must be given their full value, and each with its principal note must sound like a pair of quavers with an emphasis on the first. The charm of the next theme, in D, is in its contradiction of the natural wing, by slurring the pairs of notes across the rhythm. This must be carefully observed in all parts. After the brilliant passage of triplets in the piano part, the strings must enter very suddenly with the new theme in D, and the staccato minims must be held a little more than a crotchet. The corresponding place in the piano repetition of the passage must be well contrasted, for the first crotchet is to be taken staccatissimo, and the second as legato as possible. Shakes as follows :



After the pause to which these shakes lead up, thirty-four bars on from the pause-bar, there enters one of those majestic themes by which

Mozart nearly always ennobles his rondos, and opens a window into heaven in the midst of some blithe strains that are in danger of getting trivial. The dialogue between piano and strings—they continuing the movement of what has gone before—is carried to an exceptional height of musical and poetical interest, and part of the effect is realized in the piano accompaniment of triplets, which must be played in the way which later composers have sometimes chosen to call *armonioso*, i.e. with slight prolongations of the actual notes, so that they overlap, and judicious use of the sustaining pedal. The grandeur of this section is equalled by the humour of the next, in which all the usual preparations are made for the return to the principal theme, when in its stead there appears first one and then another of the auxiliary subjects. When at last the main subject does come, after a long shake on the piano, great care must be taken at its point of entry to make it clear that the concluding notes of the shake are actually the first notes of the rondo theme. To effect this neatly the strings must let their cadential figure virtually disappear. Bars 11 and 12 before the close of the work, the pianist should notice that he has one last opportunity of giving pairs of *legatissimo* quavers, and so

summing up the special characteristics of the composition.

### BEETHOVEN'S STRING QUARTET IN E FLAT, OP. 74

Since every page of every one of Beethoven's immortal string quartets contains points of interest and instruction for the student of ensemble, it is not easy to choose one for detailed analysis; but the so-called 'Harfen-Quartett' occupies a distinguished position among the works of the middle period, and perhaps gives as many opportunities as any of the series for pointing out the kind of details which make up an adequate interpretation. It is clear that the string quartet is the form in which the highest qualities of the concerted player are most necessary, and which allows an almost infinite amount of polishing if, the performance is to be made as good as it can be.

The opening direction *sotto voce* implies a complete negation of separate individuality until the fourth bar, where the first violin has a single note that should be slightly expressive, and should be surpassed in this particular by the note of the second violin through this and the next bar. Note also that the crescendo in the second violin is delayed until bar 10; the

*Poco  
allagio.*

espressivo quavers in bar 11 must be perfectly unanimous in expression, and the big chord must sound as if played on one huge instrument. In bar 2 of the allegro the second violin must guard against making his figure too prominent on the one hand and too subordinate on the other. Of course the leading theme is that played by the first violin and followed by the viola, who must be sure to make his first note important enough. Where the reiterated quavers of the two violins come, the violoncello and viola must assimilate their pizzicatos to each other, so that the name 'harp quartet' may be justified, and the same holds good with the repetition of the passage with interchanged parts.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of bar 33 there is no need to warn the leader to make his descent from the high B flat sufficiently prominent. Ten bars before the double-bar the lower strings have an important little figure of quavers. Two bars after the double-bar the viola must exercise the same discretion that was recommended before to the second violin, steering between undue prominence and servile subordination; the second violin has the leading part for the moment, the first doing little but echo the phrase; the close imitation soon gene-

<sup>1</sup> See T. F. Dunhill, *Chamber Music*, pp. 39, 40.

rated between the two must be kept very clearly distinguished. The delivery of this phrase by the first violin over the semiquavers of the middle parts may be almost freely declaimed, and the violoncello part is here of scarcely less importance. Where the latter instrument imitates the violin's scale down to a B natural, the note below its normal compass, care must be taken to make the change to the higher octave sound quite simple; there must be no fuss made in taking it, or the effect will be spoilt. For some time the violoncello imitates the leader, and the second violin the viola; these imitations must be as exact in phrasing as may be. When the harp-like passage is resumed by the three lower instruments the sustained notes of the leader must be quite simply played and no *crescendo* made until it is marked in each part. Counting the bar now reached, the beginning of the *reprise*, as the first, the fortieth is the bar that first claims our attention, since the phrase in which the viola and violoncello at first were together, in thirds, is now started by the former instrument and will be naturally emphatic. At the repetition of the cadence marked *ppp* it is not desirable that a *rallentando* should be made. The brilliant *arpeggio* passages for the leader over the 'harp'

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figure of accompaniment present no difficulty of ensemble, as the lower strings must just follow the first violin as an accompaniment.

*Adagio.*

At the beginning of the *Adagio* the first violin is marked *cantabile* and the rest *mezza voce*, so that it is easy to keep the proper balance between the melody and the accompaniment. The ornamental note (first violin, bar 23) is not a real appoggiatura, robbing the dotted crotchet of two-thirds of its value, but has the value which is ordinarily (and wrongly) given in the present day to the appoggiatura, i.e. approximately about a semiquaver's length. The direction *espressivo*, bar 49, &c., for the lower strings will be all the more carefully observed as they have been subordinate hitherto. The leader's demisemiquavers, bar 61, may be taken freely as well as the little run down at the third bar after the resumption of the theme, while the three lower strings must assimilate their arpeggios to each other. At the last return of the theme, where the leader has it an octave lower than at first, while the second violin has staccato demisemiquavers, the entrance of the theme may be heralded by a tiny *rallentando*, just to accommodate the two semiquavers in the first violin with the triplets in the other parts.

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All through the presto care must be taken to *Presto.* play the last three quavers of the bar in such a way as to make it clear that the time-signature is  $\frac{3}{4}$  and not  $\frac{6}{8}$ . At first the first violin must be a little more prominent than the rest. Nine bars after the double-bar the soaring arpeggio begun by the leader must be phrased in exactly the same way by each of the others successively. At bar 37 after the same double-bar, the little pairs of quavers in the first violin part may be taken a little shorter than the exact time, and the second must always be taken off as if it were staccato. Nine bars before the next double-bar the violoncello phrase of reiterated quavers is to be well brought out, as it is the source of a figure that gains great prominence at the end of the quartet. The direction at the beginning of the *più presto—Si ha s'immaginar la battuta di  $\frac{6}{8}$* —is a little ambiguous, but it should probably be  $\frac{6}{4}$ , and the point of the direction is that each pair of bars should be accentuated as if they were one, thus :







than that between the second and third. This is the secret of all really effective triplets, and it is the mark of the unskilled player or singer to hurry the second member of the triplet in relation to the third. In the next variation the semiquaver figure is of slightly more importance than the detached notes. The next, *sempre p. e dol.*, may give equal prominence to all parts, but all must be as smooth as possible. The leader in the next will execute his ascending passages with a certain amount of bravura. At the variation headed *un poco più vivace* the violoncello triplets must set the time and should be as evenly played as may be, in consideration of the pairs of quavers which the others have against them. The triplets contain the germ of the conclusion of the whole work, so that the responsibility of the violoncello player at their start is not slight.

SCHUMANN'S QUINTET FOR PIANOFORTE AND  
STRINGS, OP. 44

The Quintet in E flat, Op. 44, represents Schumann's work at its highest point, and there is no cause for surprise that it should have reached an unassailable point of popularity with all classes of music-lovers, though it was some time before it was generally accepted in London. This was

partly due, of course, to the organized opposition that met each successive composition of the master as it appeared; partly, too, to its unfamiliar idiom and its wonderful wealth of original melody. There is hardly any work of the classical period which so amply repays minute study and analysis, and it is so representative and so well known that no excuse need be offered for going through it in detail from the point of view of ensemble. It is true that there is little of the fine, if somewhat conventional, way of treating the four stringed instruments in antiphony or in opposition to the pianoforte; seldom do they unite in a regular dialogue with the keyed instrument, but the way they are used is very instructive, even though it has sometimes been reproached with the excessive prominence of the pianoforte part. I think we shall find the best key to its interpretation if we consider the various degrees of animation that can be conveyed by means other than the slackening or hastening of the time and varying the different degrees of force. The whole work resolves itself into a succession of beautiful melodic thoughts relieved against a background that may be excused if it seems almost colourless at times. It must be remembered that the more vivid the

outstanding portions the greater may be what I may call the 'deadness' of the accompaniments for the time being. By this 'deadness' I mean, neither mechanical dullness nor a sentimental kind of unobtrusiveness. I mean rather a withdrawal of all emphasis and interest from the tone, an entire absence of vibrato in the string parts and of cantabile in the piano. Perhaps only players who possess the power of giving great animation to their performances can thoroughly realize the complete negation of this quality without becoming mechanical. For the deadness of a machine is a very different thing from the passivity of a sleeping animal. Even Queen Anne herself was never half so dead as the pianola.

The Quintet must begin with the utmost vivacity in all parts. This will be obtained in the first strain by strong 'agogic' accents in bars 3 and 7, where, after the first crotchet, an infinitesimal pause may be made. The rising sevenths in each string part in bars 9-16 must be strongly brought out, as well as the rising octaves, in which there is less danger of neglect as they are marked with accents. To mark the difference in poetic intention in the same phrase when it forms the beginning of the new theme in the piano, bar 26, is an obvious

*Allegro  
brillante.*

necessity, and from bar 34, where the violin takes up the thread, the others must be subdued. Bars 50 and 52 must be played by the violoncello with great insight; the former has the *marcato* rise of the octave, and the latter repeats the same notes but with considerably less animation and point, while the second violin and viola must divest their single notes, here and just before the *poco ritardando*, of all musical interest. The dialogue which now follows will bear almost any amount of phrasing, and its support by the piano's groups of three reiterated chords must be little more than a rhythmic pulsation. The third *a tempo*, nineteen bars before the double-bar, may have all the emphasis the players can give it, but it is quite possible for the pianist to make his descending quavers too definite and precise; a certain amount of excitement is required to lead back to the opening, or forward to the development section, in which the first thing to arrest attention should be the new figure on the piano, which soon becomes an interesting passage, in the course of which the strings have nothing to do but sustain the changing harmonies and occasionally to emphasize the rhythm. When this figure ceases and the strings have the demi-semiquaver triplet in octaves, we have the first

bit of dialogue between the strings as a group and the piano answering them. From this point all the details of ensemble are repetitions of those already dealt with; one more requires notice, sixteen bars before the end of the movement. Where the violins and viola begin their pairs of quavers on the harmony of the augmented sixth on A natural, a sudden *pianissimo* on the fourth beat of the bar was quite clearly intended by the composer, although it does not appear in the original edition, nor in that prepared by Mme Schumann, since, with almost meticulous piety, she omitted to rectify such oversights as this. From the point referred to there is a natural crescendo up to the end.

The second movement, that wonderfully impressive funeral march, is easy in the matter of ensemble, if only it is realized which are the parts where life and rhythm are most required. The little introductory phrase on the piano, though of subordinate value, must be taken with due gravity and a kind of presage of solemnity. All parts but the first violin at the opening are to be 'dead' in tone, but very rhythmic, and as the melodic phrase passes from one instrument to another, it must have full vitality for a moment. The composer's *marcato* exactly expresses it, but

*In modo  
d'una  
marcia.*

in the quietly swaying accompaniment of the next section in C major, his direction *espressivo* is surely a little too strong. The first violin must stand in the front rank, and the violoncello in the second; the background of triplets in the piano and quavers in the second violin and viola must provide a hazy atmosphere in which there should be very little variety of tone, and no sense of the one contradicting the other. The *agitato* section must be animated in all parts, and the dialogue between the piano and the strings nine bars after it begins must be duly insisted on. After the repeat mark, the viola, with the first subject of the march, must be the most prominent, the first violin and violoncello, with the allusions to the *agitato* movement, must stand out clearly but not too prominently, and the piano part can hardly be too subordinate, since the second violin's tremolando must keep up the mood of agitation. Seven bars before the end of the movement, the second violin, resuming his bow after the pizzicato accompaniment, must bring out the discordant notes with great emphasis, and the final chord, for strings alone, may legitimately be taken in the way sanctioned by Schumann's greatest contemporaries, not as he wrote it. Thus :

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1ST VIOLIN.  
Harm.

2ND VIOLIN.

VIOLA.

VIOLONCELLO.

sounding as  
a harmonic  
chord:

not, as origin-  
ally printed,  
thus:

The first violin has an artificial harmonic, producing on the fourth string the double octave of the note C stopped by the first finger. The second violin and viola play their octave harmonics on the fourth string, and the violoncello has his harmonic at the fifth, on the first, A, string. The string parts in the original edition have the words *son harmonique* added underneath the notes which appear to be double-stoppings; but if they are meant for single harmonics, it is obvious that the chord must have only three notes. Some later editions, such as that of Peters, give the harmonic chord on all four instruments, as above.

The only difficulty in the main part of the *Molto vivace.*



schерzo is to give the effect of tumultuous rushing without allowing the rhythm to get out of hand. The piano figure in the first trio must of course be kept well under, and its chords in the second trio be very clear in rhythm. An important duty devolves upon the second violin and viola two bars before the *reprise* of the main subject, to return from the rapid semiquavers to quaver-triplets, so as to set the time for the schерzo's return. It is easy for a scrupulous pianist to spoil the coda by too dull and accurate a performance of the swaying octaves ; remember all the excitement that has past and let it be reflected even in this simple figure. But perhaps players who can keep their feelings fully under control through this movement are performers of a kind whom it is impossible to advise ; and if human nature is present, the right reading of this part of the work will be followed naturally.

*Allegro ma  
non troppo.*

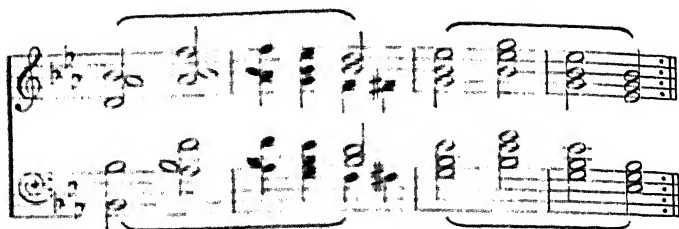
This holds good even more certainly in the joyous finale, where animation must prevail throughout. The pianist must guard against taking the quavers too heavily. Eight bars before the signature changes to four sharps, the viola, violoncello, and piano must take the triplet of crotchets very deliberately, and after the change of signature the piano's quavers must be like

storm passing at a great distance. At bar 20 after the signature changes, the viola and first violin have two themes against one another, followed presently by the violoncello and the second violin; care must be taken to get the right balance between the two members of the dialogue, so that both themes are distinct; and in the *allegato* theme there is another point to be noticed, that the second violin and viola have to phrase it in two different ways in succession, thus:



After on the piano treats the same theme in a third way, and it is necessary to make the three treatments stand out as separate from each other. At the direction *con anima* in the piano part, sixty-two bars after the return to the original key, the pace will naturally be very slightly quickened, and control can be recovered at the entrance of accented quavers in the second violin part, against the first theme on the piano. On the cessation of the quaver figure we have the two themes again in

association, but this time the piano has a new phrasing of that already quoted :



Fairly soon afterwards come three pauses in all parts ; the best interpretation of these is to regard the first and second as if there were two more minims in the bar, in other words, as if a whole bar were added after each ; the third pause may be taken more *ad libitum*, but it must be noted that there is a pause on the rest after the chord, not only on the chord itself. The fine entry of the first theme of the whole quintet against the main theme of the finale is one of the effects that almost 'makes itself', and from this to the fanfare-like chords for the piano at the end, all is absolutely clear.

BRAHMS'S QUINTET FOR CLARINET AND STRINGS,  
OP. 115

- o It may be said that the greater and more numerous the contrasts of tone-quality, the easier

is the ensemble of the piece. So that an orchestral score is for the most part easy in ensemble, next to that such a work as Beethoven's Septet, or Mozart's quintet for pianoforte and wind, and most difficult of all, those works which, like a string quartet, present only one quality of timbre. Where there is one outstanding feature, as in the case of the lovely quintet which Brahms wrote for Herr Mühlfeld and the Joachim Quartet, various problems of great interest arise, for sometimes the clarinet is the most prominent of the solo parts, and at others (though rarely) its tone is hardly individualized, as it merely enriches the harmonies of the accompanying instruments. In the memorable interpretation by the great artists for whom the work was written, nothing was more wonderful than the way in which Joachim and Mühlfeld vied with each other as to the amount of meaning and poetry which each put into his solo passages, and the self-obliteration of each as his part grew less important. In view of the strong individuality of the clarinet tone, this self-obliteration was harder to accomplish in this part than in any other.

In the first bar, and in all corresponding places, *Allegro*. there was always a strong 'agogic' accent on the first note of the group of six semiquavers, and in

bar 5 the clarinet rose to take the leading part from a subordinate place in the tonic harmony. The group of six semiquavers which immediately precedes the forte at letter A was of course a point of great effect, but at once after that note (A, sounding F sharp) its repetitions, though still forte, were not emphasized at all, so that the violoncello's announcement of the expressive continuation of the theme came out almost as prominently as the violin's delivery of it four bars afterwards. At letter B the two tone-qualities are set in sharpest contrast, the strings having their shortest staccatos, and the clarinet playing one of the characteristic arpeggio passages, of which more follow presently. At letter C all become uniform again, for the clarinet, playing in octaves with the viola, disguises the characteristic tone as effectually as possible. Though the contrasting effect is kept out of sight, here, eight bars after letter C, is the emotional climax of the movement, where the first violin and clarinet give out in octaves one of those passionate strains which are so typical of Brahms. For a perfect interpretation of these two octave passages, the clarinet and the two string players should study each other's methods minutely. The direction *f. sempre più* four bars before letter M is a little

puzzling, but it seems to refer to emotional purport rather than to actual force. The direction *Adagio. con sordini* in the string parts of the adagio seems intended, not so much to keep them subordinated to the clarinet throughout the movement, as to increase the effect of the plaintive two-bar phrase which the clarinet first gives out in bars 5-6. The second violin two bars later echoes it without emphasis, and five bars later still the first violin has it with infinite poignancy, answered by the wind instrument again. The muted strings are as it were the natural complement to the clarinet tone, and both together give a colouring of hopeless, chilling gloom relieved presently, at the change of key to B minor, by the resumption of the opening theme of the whole work on the clarinet; the strings, for some time onward, are nothing but an accompaniment to the rhapsodical utterances of the clarinet, excepting that the first violin has a little ritornello-like theme two bars before letter B and again five bars after the same letter. From letter D, the violoncello has rhapsodical passages which must be played in a corresponding way to those of the clarinet, though not in slavish imitation. Two bars before the return to the main theme at letter F, the clarinet rhapsodies are echoed by the first violin,

which must only acquire chief importance at the second of its phrases, leading into the main theme. It is impossible to forget the exquisite beauty of the interpretation of the last eleven bars of the movement by the great masters of their craft, how Mühlfeld seemed to have exhausted all the meaning there was in the pianissimo phrase, and to have left nothing for Joachim to do but to provide an exact imitation; the violinist, while naturally keeping the phrase perfectly soft and perfectly under control, yet conveyed a deeper significance and an even more eloquent emotion.

*Andantino.* The beginning of the *Andantino* is one of the things that 'plays itself', and the more simply it is interpreted the greater will be the effect of its message. At the eighth bar after letter A the viola, the first violin, and the clarinet must pay strict attention to the slurs over each pair of semi-quavers, and contrast them well with the larger slur for the viola and first violin which succeeds them.

*Presto non assai.* The finale is one of the typical Brahms movements that seem to belong to the air rather than to the earth, and yet convey the impression of a very real regret; with the descending passage of the clarinet, soon followed by the first violin and viola, we are brought back to earth, but the main outline of the section is one of lightness that

is as far as possible from triviality. At the opening of the gracious finale, the clarinettist must remember that his little phrases are only complementary to those of the first violin, and should notice that while all are marked *forte*, only the two violins have *espressivo*. At letter A the violoncello may be as prominent, and almost as free, as he likes; and even in the *piano* repetitions of the variation, importance must not be lost sight of. A slight stridency in the clarinet part at letter B will be no harm. At letter C the clarinet has to let the hearer into the secret that his little complementary phrase at the opening of the movement is in reality a simplified version of the phrase with which the whole quintet began and which is soon to monopolize attention once more. The repeated section before letter D marks a place where for a moment the clarinet is allowed to have a solo that is almost showy. At letter D the second violin must recognize that to him belongs the little turn that is the essence of the opening theme of all; a strong 'agogic' accent, without the slightest emphasis, will serve to bring out the identity. The variation that begins at letter E may be taken by the viola over the pizzicatos of the violoncello in a manner that suggests the word 'gallant', and the more 'style'



there is in this part of the movement the better. The emotional climax of the whole quintet is reached at the passage headed *Un poco meno mosso*, where the original theme returns as if it were one of the variations. It must enter very quietly on the first violin, and the 'agogic' accents and the diminuendo must be faithfully reproduced from the opening movement. The whole composition is a masterpiece of the art of ensemble, and the artists who can play it really properly need fear nothing in the direction of concerted music.

## CHAPTER III

### PIANOFORTE ENSEMBLE


#### I. SOLO ENSEMBLE



SUCH an absurd contradiction in terms as is implied in the sub-heading of this chapter demands an explanation if not actually an apology. For the association of a word meaning 'alone' with a word meaning 'together' argues either a sad ignorance of foreign languages or a love of flippant paradox of which, by this time, most people have got heartily tired. Yet inasmuch as the pianist has two hands, a little reflection will show that even in the simplest pianoforte piece the two hands must occasionally be required to occupy in turn the more prominent position, and herein lies the pianist's great advantage over the mechanical substitutes for his performance which are at present firmly established in public favour. One of the student's first difficulties is to make his hands and fingers press so equally on the keys that no prominence is heard; Mendelssohn was accustomed to make his pupils play a chord until

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even he could detect no preponderance of tone in any one note. Such equality, if logically pursued even through the shortest piece in the Schumann 'Album', would result in most wearisome monotony and in complete stultification of the composer's intention. Of course Mendelssohn's test was only imposed as a means to an end, that end being the attainment of the power to vary the degrees of force of each finger's stroke at will. A pianist who should allow it to be perceived by the ear that one of his fingers was weaker than the rest would stand small chance of success, and the various systems of pianoforte technique aim at giving this equality of finger simply and solely in order that the interpreter's will, not the comparative strength or stiffness of his fingers, may be brought out. On the plucked keyed instruments of the past (the virginal, the harpsichord, or spinet), where there was no possibility of emphasizing one note more than another by the pressure of the finger, composers and players had to find what we may call some artificial means of making one note more prominent than the others. Of these the ornaments in use down to the beginning of the nineteenth century (the 'pralltriller', 'mordent', and so forth) were so multiplied that in translating the pieces for the modern piano-

forte we are obliged, in order to give an intelligible version of them, to leave out many of the less important embellishments.<sup>1</sup> A far more effectual way of emphasizing the accent was by what is now called the 'agogic accent', a slight lingering after the emphatic note has been played. As a rule this lingering is in its proper place at the beginning of the bar, so that after the first note an appreciable interval of time is allowed to be left; this custom has been found to be of such utility in the way of making clear the proper phrasing of the passage that it has been adopted from the pianoforte to other instruments, and the great classical interpreters, down to Joachim and his associates, were wont to give a great amount of this 'agogic' effect. But after all this is an artificial means of making clear to the listener the anatomy of the piece. The pianist is none the less bound to acquire the art of making prominent any desired note in a chord, and for this purpose I would

<sup>1</sup> At the congress of the Société Internationale de Musique, held in Paris in June, 1914, I suggested an alternative way of interpreting the typical ornaments of old music, which is agreeable to listen to, and which avoids the danger of making them sound 'fussy'.  is played, not

thus , but , the principal note sounding on, after the auxiliary has been heard.

suggest that the student should practise for a short time such an exercise as the following, until the sequence of the notes emphasized can be followed by the ear alone :



Many clever pianists, it is obvious, go through the world and make a good living by playing, from whom the secrets of ensemble-playing are altogether hidden ; but never was there one who could really afford to despise them, and in solo music, if it be worth the name of music at all, there are plenty of instances where the power of fitting together the different degrees of force is of the greatest service, since it does more than anything else to lessen the mechanical effect of a performance.

I do not propose, in this chapter, to go through any pianoforte music in detail, as in almost any sonata or solo piece there are whole tracts where the prominence of a melody is to be duly kept above the accompaniment, and every capable teacher will insist on this being done. In fugue-

playing, too, it is unnecessary to state that the subject, at its successive appearances, must be given prominence, the other parts being allowed to retire into the background during its progress. At each stretto, as a rule, the entry of the subject must be made more emphatic than at first, though in the *Wohltemperirtes Clavier* there are hundreds of passages where authorities will differ as to the proper amount of prominence to be given to this part or that. A purist will take care to give to the first statement of the theme only such phrasing as can appropriately be imitated exactly in the other parts; in the thirteenth fugue of the first book (F sharp major), if the player make too elaborate a shake in the first bar, he may find it difficult or impossible to make it as neatly in bars 12 and 15, where the right hand has another part to play as well. In such a case, care should be taken to make no more of a shake in the first instance than can be exactly imitated in the later bars. But a more difficult problem in ensemble is the fourth fugue of the same book, in C sharp minor, where the three themes have to be distinguished from one another in the various combinations of that wonderful composition. Here if a rich sonority is the characteristic of the first theme, and a bright and even-flowing legato

of the second, where the quavers come in, the third will be easily recognizable throughout if at first it is given almost *martellato* after the second of its notes. In the twenty-second fugue of the first book, the last nine bars contain a very difficult question, if the splendid stretto is to be clear.



As each note of the descending minims (except the first and the last) has to serve both as the first note of the subject and the second, it is obvious that in the first statement of the subject there must not be much difference between the two, and as regards these descending minims, nothing but a gradual crescendo through bars 9-6 from the end is practicable. The descending crotchets have none of them to perform a double

function like the minims, and here it seems enough if the start of each descent be marked with a slight pressure. On the clavichord, for which the 'forty-eight' were written, it is possible to give to these starting crotchets a special prominence by means of the beautiful device known as the 'Bebung', that is, a little tremolo executed by varying pressure of the finger on the key.

Fugue 5 of the second book presents almost as hard a problem in a similar place, bars 7-6 from the end.



Here we may, I think (having in view this difficulty at the end of the fugue), phrase the subject as three light quavers, leading to a prominent crotchet followed by another crotchet of an intermediate degree of importance. This will allow us to make some intelligible explanation to the hearer of the difficult stretto where the parts cross. At the beginning of bar 6 from the end (the first complete bar of the above quotation), the



F sharps (quavers) will be light but very distinct, the D (crotchet) will be the most prominent note for the moment. When it passes up to F sharp, this note must be very carefully made quite distinct from the reiterated quavers that have just been played, and must be slightly subordinated to the B, to which the three F sharp quavers have now passed; the same thing, a twelfth below, has to be contrived in the left hand, but it may be doubted if any one has ever succeeded in playing these bars so that the unaided ear could distinguish the motion of the four parts quite clearly.

To go through the classics in detail and point out all the places where 'ensemble', as between the two hands of the player, is required, would evidently be impossible as well as tedious; it must suffice to refer to some 'leading cases', in some of which famous artists have been led into exaggeration by their anxiety to show themselves more intelligent than their fellows. These instances naturally occur in the most hackneyed pieces in the repertory. For example, in the 'Waldstein' sonata of Beethoven, Op. 53, at bar 38 of the first movement, there is a *sforzando* over an inner part, the note B being about to lead into the repetition of the second subject an octave below its first appearance. Here is a case in

which the greatest subtlety is needed; for to emphasize the B at the cost of the upper part, which at that moment has the climax of the little melody in its G sharp, is to sacrifice the effect of the whole. Obviously the B must be brought out, but a student of acoustics, however little he may have learnt, will notice that the tone of the B is enforced by its being an octave above the bass note, so that it naturally has some advantage such as is not enjoyed by the corresponding note three bars before, where the bass note is E. Each player must decide for himself how much tone shall be given to the B relatively to the G sharp it supports, and according to his decision will he be placed by intelligent hearers in the hierarchy of the artists. Only a phonographic record could do justice to the absurd excess of emphasis which I myself have heard given to this note by players of repute; the theme itself was thrown completely out of balance, and cases have even been known where the player has looked round for recognition of his perception in 'bringing out' the point, which of course became unspeakably tiresome as soon as attention was fixed upon it.

Schumann's music for pianoforte solo is so full of points where a good ensemble is desirable,

that it is difficult to choose instances for illustration; but 'Warum?' affords perhaps as good examples as need be wished, and it has the advantage of being among the best-known of the master's works. The difficulties of ensemble begin at the third bar, where the reiterated F's in the right hand must gradually acquire prominence though they begin in the middle of the left-hand chords, until in bar 5 they are transformed into the imitation of the melody, and have for the moment the most important part, till the treble part again has the lead. In bar 10 it is perhaps worth noticing that the little ornament is properly played as a 'Nachschlag', i.e. the C of the alto part coincides with the main note of the treble, not with the first note of the ornament. The other ornamental notes are to be carefully studied in the matter of their position. Thus in bar 12 the two little notes might be taken as being parallel to each other; but it is not so, for the first is comprised in the limits of the bar, and must not be struck till after the bass note, while the other, at the end of the bar, should strictly speaking precede the start of the arpeggio in the bass. If so taken, it will be difficult to show the connexion between the B flat and the D flat to which it leads after so long a delay. In bars 3

and 4 after the double-bar, the first note of the former, the bass F, should be a little more emphatic and 'interesting' than the preceding notes at the beginning of each bar, as it is the real start of the theme which is taken up by the right hand. In the last bar the alto F must be taken, *before the repeat*, with some foreshadowing of prominence, since it anticipates the return to the subject; but at the end, after repetition, it may be allowed to subside quietly into its chord. But there is not a page of Schumann where a bad ensemble player will not be sure to make mistakes, or where a true Schumann-lover will fail to find plenty of interesting little questions of interpretation.

Perhaps there is no composer in the pianist's repertory who is so misunderstood as Chopin. Countrymen of those who cannot be content to let Chopin's simple orchestral accompaniments alone, but must needs conclude that it was from ignorance, not choice, that he left them so slight in texture, are fond of discovering in some inner part of a waltz-accompaniment or elsewhere some little touch of 'part-writing'; they thereupon push their discovery so pertinaciously that the hearer is not allowed to feel the beauty of the thing for himself, but a Chopin recital becomes a singularly

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**L**ull counterpoint lesson. The most flagrant instance of all is perhaps in the Ballade in A flat, Op. 47. The contrasting theme in F major, introduced by descending octave C's, is one of Chopin's most engaging ideas, the tender beauty of which needs phrasing as a dancer might phrase it. At its second appearance these bars occur in its second half:



the tenor part, as it may be called, differing from that in the first occurrence of the theme. It is obvious to every careful hearer that there is a charming little counterpoint, of a rising scale against the tripping downwards of the theme, but in the less authoritative editions there is apt to be an accent placed over these tenor notes to

lure virtuosi to their doom. It is one of the rarest things, even with players who like to be known as special interpreters of Chopin, to find this passage played with any remaining perception of the beauty of the theme itself and its need for prominence; when the unfortunate counterpoint comes in it is given with full force and a great crescendo which obliterates all the character of the theme it should accompany. There are frequent instances in Chopin where the same sort of thing is apt to be heard from the average public player, but it would be wearisome to attempt to enumerate them all. There are many passages in which a real difficulty of ensemble is present, for we may be sure that Chopin was not so anxious as his interpreters to pose as a contrapuntal authority, and that he never interfered with the 'singing' of his chief melody. At the end of the twenty-third prelude the left hand has to play an E flat in the penultimate bar at the top of its arpeggio. Only the best editions give the note, for the common German editions, as if unable to countenance such a breach of rules as the introduction of a seventh into the final chord, have altered the note to F. But, granting that we believe in the best editions, there is no reason why the note

should be strongly accentuated as, I am sorry to say, is implied in the Breitkopf and Härtel edition, by a mark over it. The note E flat is quite evidently intended to represent the almost inaudible 'harmonic seventh' which is present in every musical sound as the sixth upper partial. The chord is certainly not the dominant seventh, meant to make us long for a chord of B flat, but a perfectly satisfactory ending to the little piece. The E flat should be as softly played as possible, so that it may take a place in the scheme something like what its original, the true harmonic seventh, takes in a chord.

The study in C sharp minor from the second book, No. 19, demands some perception, at least, of the questions involved in the matter of ensemble; while it is quite obvious that the left hand is the predominant partner throughout, it must not be supposed that the melody at the top of the right-hand part is to 'go for nothing', although (despite its transient imitation of the theme) it does not acquire more than a very subordinate position until the twenty-second bar, and even there must be kept under the left-hand part. Players of average intelligence, however, are not likely to make mistakes in this regard, as the purport of the study is sufficiently clear.

In the solo music of Brahms there is, for the most part, little need to go into detail about ensemble, for it was only rarely that he showed any of the deep love that Chopin had for the piano as an instrument; in early life Brahms seems to have regarded it as the only available substitute for an orchestra, and it is mainly in the latest pianoforte pieces, Opp. 116-19, that he writes music which would be impoverished if transferred to some other instrument. Perhaps the most striking thing in these pieces, for our present purpose, is the Intermezzo in E, Op. 116, No. 4. The practice, comparatively rare in Brahms, of letting the right hand cross over the left to play the bass seems a mere eccentricity at the beginning, but later on its purpose is fully explained. For while most people find it easy to play *cantabile* with their right hands, it is less easy to make a left-hand part 'sing', and in the light of what comes later on we may take it that the opening notes, which are a little more than an accompaniment but a good deal less than the chief melody, might be in danger of gaining too much importance if the right hand were allowed to take them; so that it is occupied safely out of the way on the bass note at the beginning of the bar in order that when it comes up again

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to take the chief melody the full richness of its cantabile may be given. This disposition of the hands starts the piece with three distinct qualities of tone: the right-hand cantabile at the top, the comparatively uninteresting figure for the left hand in the middle, and the support of the bass. At the ninth and tenth complete bars there is another crossing of hands, in which the special character of the left-hand arpeggio must be preserved all the way up; it is not a matter of avoiding a superfluous *crescendo*, but of giving to the left hand a kind of individuality in its subordinate place, which will, when it crosses, be clearly perceived as something other than the melodic part, which must make itself suitably prominent above and below the left hand. At bar 32 comes a little ritornello-like phrase, the effect of which would be lost if it were given with great expression by the right hand; again the right hand is banished to the bass part, and the left hand can make itself as expressive as it likes. At bar 36 and onwards it is to be noticed that the right-hand chords are never to be played *arpeggiando* until the very last note of the piece. The beautiful effect of an arpeggio chord leading to one played at once (*non arpeggiando* or *concento*) is very often lost in performances of this inter-

mezzo, as players who ought to know better have not looked carefully at the marks.

Every tiro knows that there are many pieces in which it is only necessary for him to play the notes in their proper time and with the proper degree of force; but that in other compositions this technical mastery is by far the least important part of his task; when this is accomplished he stands but on the threshold of his difficulties. There are not many works for the piano which belong more distinctly to the latter class than César Franck's noble 'Prélude, Aria et Final', which is at last beginning to be realized as a different work from the more hackneyed 'Prélude, Choral, et Fugue'. Very few compositions have so great an abundance of passages where one interpretation may differ from another and yet both be good. Not many present so many interesting problems of ensemble; there is good reason for this, for it seems doubtful whether the composer intended it first for a piano solo or for a trio (pianoforte, violin, and violoncello), in which form it is interesting if not particularly exciting. Whether the solo version is or is not a transcription of a piece of chamber music, need not concern us here; the same qualities that make for a good ensemble in the one case will

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bring success in the other. The gradual expansion of the simple theme of the prelude into complicated part-writing, in which every part must be clearly heard on its own plane of prominence, the successive additions to the thematic material, as each new subject is combined with its predecessors, and the management of the climax so that the original theme returns with all possible effect, these are things which it takes more than a student to realize and more than a virtuoso to perform. At point after point the relative strength of the different parts has to be thought of, and the various strands woven into a fabric of a rather subdued splendour. The secret of the Aria, which some people find difficult to follow, is that each section of the theme is first given out in the treble part and immediately afterwards in the bass, so that whatever degree of cantabile has been used for the top part must be transferred to the bottom, and the player's mentality must, so to speak, be inverted in like manner. The curious introduction of a new melody in the last fifteen bars of this section of the work is not an easy thing to make clear, but it must be done at all costs, since the new melody has a very important place at the climax of the last movement. Happily at its occurrence there is no other melody to confuse

the issue, and it is surely lawful to play it with an amount of emphasis that would be in questionable taste if the ultimate destination of the theme were left out of account. In the Finale there is little to discuss in detail except the need for giving the first theme of the Aria (occurring about half-way through in D flat) with due expression, and playing the pianissimo quavers in the bass in such a way as to show that the figure (and therefore the main theme of the Finale) is but the subject of the Aria in 'double diminution'. At the climax, where the new theme first heard at the end of the Aria is combined for its whole length with the subject of the Prelude, the problem of relative importance will be solved by each real artist in his own way; but there is little doubt that the new theme needs rather more attention than the other. In the first place, it is in an inner part and therefore less obviously prominent; and in the second, it was only heard once through in the earlier movement, and never underwent any process of development such as made the theme of the Prelude familiar. Something will depend, too, upon the sonority of the actual piano used; on an instrument with a very brilliant treble one must bring out the tenor part very carefully, while on a piano with a rich

bass the two themes might almost be played with the same actual degree of force, though of course each requires to be phrased quite independently of the other. The most powerful note of the whole must be the G sharp near the end of the themes where the two are united on one note; it is not only the climax of the 'new' theme, but the union of the two parts must be shown by a doubled sonority of tone. Only an experienced artist will make the remainder of the movement other than an anticlimax; but there is nothing in the way of ensemble until the last seven bars, where the little imitations derived from the main theme of the Aria are to be delicately brought out.

#### DUET ENSEMBLE (FOUR HANDS)

It is fairly obvious that in the disposition of players which allows the four hands to play on the same keyboard, there is a most urgent need of some instinct for concerted playing. Most people look back with a shiver of reminiscence to schoolroom days, when four cold and clumsy little hands were driven through classical 'arrangements' with the help, perhaps, of a ruler occasionally applied to the red knuckles, and the constant reiteration of 'one, two, three, four' by the

instructor, bent on nothing so much as the task of making the children 'keep time'. What may be called the disciplinary function of duet-playing has indeed not very little in common with the real art of music; but sometimes the teacher was accustomed to take one of the parts, so that things got on better, and in later days the practice has increased of writing duets especially intended for the teacher to play the *secondo* part and a quite elementary pupil the treble. This of course keeps alive whatever spark of musical feeling may be present in the child's nature, and it may be hoped that the days of the cold school-room and this form of 'music-lesson' are now over. It is no doubt the memory of these bitter experiences that has deprived duet-playing of the vogue it might seem to deserve. It is of course very useful to play arrangements of symphonies and the larger concerted instrumental works, in order to become acquainted with their general outline. But it stands to reason that it is dangerous for the players who know the works in the form of piano-duets to form an opinion on their worth, for this opinion may have to be revised when the music is heard according to the composer's original intention. A couple of well-educated ladies who were accustomed

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to meet and play duets together once announced that 'they did not think much of Schumann's symphonies', and when asked what opportunities they had enjoyed of hearing them in London, complacently said that they knew them quite well as duets, and that that was enough. Still, such arrangements have no doubt done more good than harm.

Of original works for four hands on one keyboard there is a small but very choice repertory, though comparatively few people seem to remember how many admirable things there are, like Schubert's 'Divertissement à la Hongroise', Fantasia in F minor, Rondo in A, and some of the marches, Schumann's 'Bilder aus Osten', and the lovely set of twelve pieces, Op. 85. The exquisite set of variations by Brahms on the theme which Schumann in his delusion thought that Schubert had dictated to him, are well worth the trouble of bringing forward in public, and these as well as some of the Schubert pieces require considerable attention in matters of ensemble. There are special difficulties in the way of four-hand playing which do not occur elsewhere; for one thing, each player must have one of his hands in an unnatural sidelong position, a detail which is worse for the 'bass' than for the 'treble' player,

since the former has occasionally to play an important melody with his right hand, while the latter's left is rarely employed upon anything of great importance. Another defect is that since there is only one pedal of each kind, only one of the players can have the control of it; and as the 'bass' player sees what the harmonies are, it is right that he should have this control, but he must keep his attention on the melody which his companion is giving out, so as to make the pedal a help and not a hindrance in its delivery. For these causes, the *secondo* player has the more responsible task, and the more advanced musician of the two should choose this part rather than the other. Another special difficulty is that of crossing the hands, as is often necessary; here the more careful editions of the usual duets direct the players whether to put their arms above or below their partner's so as to avoid clashing or hesitation. If there are no directions it is a good plan for the hand which has to play a sustained passage to be below, as in the following from a place near the middle of the finale of Schubert's 'Divertissement':



PRIMO.

SECONDO.

This musical system contains the first four measures of a piece for two parts, Primo and Secondo. Both parts are in 2/4 time and the key of B-flat major (two flats). The Primo part is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). In measure 1, it has a half note B-flat in the treble and a whole rest in the bass. In measure 2, it has a half note D in the treble and a whole rest in the bass. In measure 3, it has a half note E in the treble and a whole rest in the bass. In measure 4, it has a half note F in the treble and a whole rest in the bass. The Secondo part is also written on a grand staff. In measure 1, it has a half note B-flat in the treble and a whole rest in the bass. In measure 2, it has a half note D in the treble and a whole rest in the bass. In measure 3, it has a half note E in the treble and a whole rest in the bass. In measure 4, it has a half note F in the treble and a whole rest in the bass.

This musical system contains measures 5 through 8 of the piece. The Primo part continues with a half note G in measure 5, a half note A in measure 6, a half note B in measure 7, and a half note C in measure 8. The Secondo part continues with a half note G in measure 5, a half note A in measure 6, a half note B in measure 7, and a half note C in measure 8.

Here the right hand of the second player should be under the left hand of his companion, since the triplets must be legato, and the other's chords lifted to correspond with the bass of the left-hand player.

A still greater difficulty, peculiar to the arrangement, is where a passage of melody or figuration passes from one player to the other. It stands to reason that in a passage such as a long arpeggio, the two must assimilate their tone to each other to disguise the 'join'; but in the case of a cantabile melody, it is not at all easy even for proficient players to take over part of a phrase, or perhaps a single note, in proper balance with the rest. In the first set of *Liebeslieder-Walzer*, a work which must be discussed from another point of view later on, if the work be played through without the voice parts, it will be found that in No. 9, 'Am Donaustrande', there is a trap that is likely to catch nine players out of ten. The melody, at its first appearance, has been played by the 'bass' player only, so that at its return the 'treble' player may naturally think that he had only to look after the ornamentation. The difficulty is increased by Brahms having slurred what is really the climax of the melody, to a note which has nothing to do with it.

PRIMO.

SECONDO.

*cant.*

This system contains the first two staves of a musical score. The top staff is for the Primo part, written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G#4, and then a half note F#4. The bottom staff is for the Secondo part, written in bass clef with the same key signature. It begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G#3, and then a half note F#3. A bracket connects the two staves. The word "cant." is written above the second measure of the Secondo staff. The system ends with a double bar line.

This system contains the next two staves of the musical score. The top staff (Primo) continues with a half note E#4, a half note D#4, and a half note C#4. The bottom staff (Secondo) continues with a half note E#3, a half note D#3, and a half note C#3. A bracket connects the two staves. The system ends with a double bar line.

## MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS (FOUR HANDS)

While many, if not most, pianists look back on the ordinary duet on one piano with bitter recollections of their schoolroom days, it is probable that music holds no greater joy for them than the occupation of playing duets on two pianos. Where each performer has the whole instrument to himself, he can regulate his own pedals irrespective of his partner, and can give his own phrasing of any prominent theme, either setting for imitation, or himself copying, some interpretation that pleases him. The interplay of two minds is perhaps never so agreeably noticed as in this kind of ensemble music, for which combination many of the greatest composers have written with a special love. The two fugues of Bach, from *Die Kunst der Fuge*, the lovely little sonata by W. F. Bach, published (as J. S. Bach's) in the B.-G. edition, vol. xliii, 1, a sonata and a concerto of Mozart, and two little sonatas of Clementi, are the chief specimens (all of them anticipated by a tiny piece only eight bars long by Giles Farnaby in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, No. 55) before the date of Schumann's justly famous Variations in B flat and Chopin's less-known Rondo in C. It is perhaps remarkable that from

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the date of these latter down to the present time there should be so large a repertory of original and arranged compositions for two pianos, seeing that the possession of two instruments in the same room is a comparative rarity even with musical people. It may show, perhaps, how the combination commends itself to players and composers that there should be such a wealth of music available.

It is of course obvious that in every duet of this kind the highest powers of ensemble playing are brought constantly into requisition. If players can succeed with this they need not shrink from association with the most distinguished players of concerted music of the more usual type. It is more necessary to have a proper regard for the 'give-and-take' of concerted music in these duets than in combination with instruments of other kinds, such as strings. For the tone of the two instruments being identical in quality, the differences between their parts must be made even clearer than in other ensemble music. The pleasure of echoing and exactly repeating what some one else has just played has led certain composers into the easy mannerism of dividing works that are really solos between the two pianos, so that each has to echo the other. It is this

which spoils the effect of Grieg's 'Romance' and various otherwise interesting compositions of Arensky. (Among modern Russians, by the way, the three pieces of César Cui and six short pieces by Glière may be quoted as remarkably successful specimens.) This trick of repetition is not entirely absent from Schumann's beautiful work already mentioned, but there is so much besides in it that this little flaw, if it be one, is easy to forgive. We are struck throughout the variations by the frequency with which the composer allows one piano to accompany the other in single bass notes or octaves, thus enriching the support of the harmony and actually adding, by sympathetic vibration, to the volume of aggregate tone. In the first variation the little echoes in the semi-quaver figures must be carefully managed. As Mme Schumann herself played them, the repetition was always a little softer than its predecessor, and had a little less life in it. It should be given very delicately and without too much emphasis or detailed phrasing. In the first half of this variation the first piano has the statement in each bar and the second the 'echo'; but in the second half each player has to intermix statements and echoes in his own part; thus in the fifth bar of this section, immediately after the *a tempo*, the

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second piano begins with a statement followed by two crotchet rests, and then an echo of the correlative phrase given by the first piano. Meanwhile the first piano begins with an echo and follows on continuously with a statement in its next bar; each of the statements should be a little more animated than the echoes, but the exact effect is quite beyond the ordinary directions to convey, for to mark the echoes *pp* or anything of that kind would be to make them mechanical. The second variation, *un poco più animato*, allows a considerable amount of freedom in the treatment of the groups of semiquavers preceded by an *acciaccatura*, and in contrast to this almost boisterous mood the figure of the third variation is to be taken with the utmost smoothness of time as well as tone. A return to the vigorous style of the second variation is made in the fourth, where the notes of the melody are to be made prominent by each player in turn. The fifth, *più lento*, is very considerably slower than what goes before, and the utmost obtainable richness is to be sought after; this is the first of the points at which the original conception of the work stands revealed, for, as students of the composer know, the variations were at first written with the accompaniment of two violoncellos and horns, and

here we have the first characteristic horn phrase in the second piano part to begin with. The sixth variation, *tempo primo*, must be phrased with great care and perception of the beauty of the part-writing at the point when the two players join forces. The seventh variation, *animato*, has less of ensemble than the others, as it is a case of mere imitation of one part by the other. Notice the way in which the difficult figure is phrased in the first half and in the second ; at first it is to be played in long phrases, the slurs embracing twelve semiquavers at a time ; at the beginning of the second every pair of semiquavers has a separate slur. It is quite true that most players have not much attention left for the slurring of this passage, as they have enough to do to get the notes right ; but it is worth while pointing out the phrasings which the composer has put, as well as the circumstance, so often ignored, that the first half is directed to be played *piano* by the first piano and *pianissimo* by the second. Variation 8 is the point at which the original disposition of the work peeps out most evidently, and the 'horn' phrases must be played with due remembrance of the kind of way that horn-players phrase. The second of the grouped pairs of semiquavers must not be taken too quickly, or the

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relevance of much of the variation will be lost. But the horn-phrase must be given the most prominent place in the scheme. The ninth variation presents no special difficulties of ensemble, and is very good practice for those who are apt to weaken their triplets by playing the second note of each a shade too soon. After the resumption of the theme for the close of the work it is necessary for each player to listen carefully to his companion, as each note must be exactly in its place in the two *ritardandos*. The final passage of semiquavers converging and diverging is one of the most graceful and effective things in existence, if only it is played by each with due regard to the phrasing of the other performer. Each may be slightly more animated as he gets to the top of his passage, and in the last five bars, where each group makes an arpeggio of one chord, the direction *armonioso* may be suggested, for the marked pedalling at this point is far from explanatory. If it is not permissible to change the pedal at every beat, then each note of the groups may be sustained a fraction beyond the strict time, so as to give the effect of a chord.

It is probably more than a coincidence that so many of the best compositions for two pianos should be in the form of variations, since this

form allows of so many combinations of the tones of the two instruments. The catalogue of Brahms's works is peculiarly rich in works for two pianos, for besides the Variations on a theme of Haydn, and the early version of the Quintet, Op. 34, the composer himself arranged his own third and fourth symphonies with incomparable skill, and the only published version of Joachim's fine *Henry IV* overture is in Brahms's arrangement of it for two pianos. The 'Haydn' variations and the Quintet, I may remind those who have not made a special study of Brahms, are not mere arrangements, the one from the orchestral version, the other from the ultimate version, as a quintet for piano and strings ; both are to be regarded as independent works, as is implied by the fact that both possess numbers of their own in his catalogue. The quintet differs in some few points from the ultimate version, and is not at all easy to play, for those who are most familiar with the concerted version will find themselves puzzled by a good many things, although the actual alterations are of the very slightest, there being none worth mentioning except an extra bar put in at two points in the first movement. The pianoforte part of the quintet is so divided between the two pianos in this version that it is

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often confusing, but most to those who have worked, perhaps too sedulously, at the quintet. The 'Haydn' variations will be best played by pianists who have heard the orchestral version of the work played under Richter, for no one has ever approached that conductor in the depth of meaning which he contrived to get out of each variation. In the delivery of the theme one of his great points was the absence of any crescendo between the first strain, *piano*, and the second, *forte*. At the end, the repeated B flats for the first piano are printed as though they were tied together; this is not the case, but each is to be distinctly heard with as little break as possible between them. These repeated notes pass to the second piano at the beginning of the first variation, first below and then above the rest; they are to be properly emphasized in all parts. The second variation brings out an effect that is peculiar to this combination of instruments, the simultaneous *staccato* and *legato*; the first piano, which is *legato* throughout, may use the pedal, of course with due observation of the harmonies. In variation 3, the second piano must be delicately adjusted to the tone of the first, and the bass must give just the desirable amount of support and no more; but all the time it must have life

in it, and not be allowed to seem expressionless. In the second section of the variation, where the semiquaver figure, with the hands two octaves apart, gives such a curious colour to the whole, the second piano must be subordinated to the first. This section is of course the first half of the theme repeated in a different treatment. In the actual second half the two players must assimilate their tone so that the dialogue may come out properly. Each little phrase may begin with a very slight accent, and there is plenty of room for such phrasing in each part as will show the poetry of the whole conception. In variation 4 the semiquavers must be subordinated to the quavers, but their flowing evenness must be preserved without forfeiting the importance which they gain as the variation goes on, for the reiterated descents to a C flat (second piano) provide the climax of the passage. The crossing rhythms of variation 5 are in some ways the hardest part of the work to play, for the whole must be kept light, and the points of *legato* touch must be suitably prominent. In variation 6 the opening figure will fail unless the player remembers how it would sound on the wind instruments. In the second part the second piano must keep something in reserve for the

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second of his descending arpeggios, as the effect will be lost if the two are played with equal force. The same thing applies to the first piano part at the end, in the last six bars of the variation. Variation 7 is one of the most happily inspired passages in the whole of Brahms, but it will be entirely spoilt if the players are anxious to bring out their own parts; each must listen to the other, for the movement of all the parts is so subtly contrived that the effect is lost if one dominates the rest. The second piano in the last eight bars has a rhythmic problem to solve which is often very imperfectly realized. Perhaps the best way to play the dotted notes is to remember the very obvious rhythm of the second half of the bar, and to continue it downwards almost mechanically. The stealthy movement of the eighth variation is not easy to maintain throughout, and the passages can hardly be played satisfactorily without a certain amount of separate study for the sake of the fingering, &c. In the second half the grouping of the quavers underneath the long slur gives a hint as to the proper phrasing of the figure. The finale contains the chief difficulties of the composition, one of the worst of which is the task of keeping the movement under proper control. The movement of two crotchets

against three is very liable to cause an unconscious hurrying, and there is a natural tendency to the same fault wherever there is a *basso ostinato* as there is here. It must be the duty of the player who has the 'ground bass', whatever its position for the moment, to restore the tempo if it has begun to be accelerated before the time. There are two passages of very great difficulty for those who are at all uncertain as to rhythm or apt to get confused in performance. Both are for the first piano; the first on p. 24, where a triplet of minims must be played, not only against the bass in common time, but against four groups of quaver triplets in the left hand. As there are twelve quavers in the latter part, it is evident that the minims fall at exact points, namely, with the first, fifth, and ninth quavers; but it is not easy to apply the simple arithmetical rule in practice. Even harder is the passage at the top of p. 26, where syncopation is added to the other complications. It must be noted at the bottom of this page that the common-time movement must be restored with due observation of its giving the effect of slowness after what has passed. In the last eleven bars of the work the second piano must realize that the repeated notes in three groups of four minims are an important feature

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of the original theme. I am not aware whether they are so in the original Haydn tune, but their salience has already been noted in dealing with the theme and the first variation.

Another set of variations may be considered in some detail. Of all M. Saint-Saëns' clever compositions none is more ingenious than the 'Variations sur un Thème de Beethoven', Op. 35, and there are very few things for two pianos which are more effective with the general public. The theme, it need not be said, is the trio of the minuet in the sonata, Op. 31, No. 3, and in the fourth bar of the introduction there is a flourish for the second piano which is obviously an allusion to the opening of the sonata in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2; care must be taken by the player, first of all, to realize that the notes of the arpeggio belong to his part (they are printed in the same type as that used for the 'cue' to show what the first piano is doing), and then to give them with some of the importance and dignity which would be felt to be desirable in beginning the D minor sonata. The theme is of course to be played with great simplicity, and the dialogue of the first variation requires nothing more than to be neatly executed with what beauty of touch the players may have at command. After the beautiful

variation marked 'Meno mosso' (No. 2) the theme reappears, this time inverted in all parts. It must be observed that in the *legato* continuation of it the bass part contains the melody which was of course at the top at first. The next variation, marked 'Molto allegro', is delightful to play if a little fatiguing; it should of course produce the effect of a series of even repetitions, which must sound almost mechanical, because the hearer must at once recognize that no single human being could play them. The next, marked 'Moderato assai', must have delicate shakes of a very rapid kind in them; the first, in the first piano part, is not easy to do quite softly. In the next, 'Presto leggierissimo', the players must be prepared to accommodate each other, for the arpeggios must exactly correspond, the first note of each being slightly emphatic. The 'Alla marcia funebre' should bring forward two very different kinds of touch, the second piano beginning with a drum-like staccato, not too short or trivial, and the first piano playing the minims with a sort of dull weight and just a little accent at the beginning. No pressure should be exerted, but the hand should fall on the notes as it were of itself. The fugato opening of the finale, 'Allegro', after the introductory bars have been repeated, is so well constructed that it requires no



hints on ensemble ; and in the 'Presto' in triple time there is nothing for it but that the players must know each other's parts by heart.


If I may be forgiven for referring to yet another set of variations, there are a good many interesting points of ensemble in Christian Sinding's variations in E flat minor for two pianos. The theme, unmistakably Northern in character, and yet almost free from the influence of Grieg, must sound as if it portended something very dignified and important to follow. In the 'Andante' variation, the chains of shakes must pass from one player to another without the break being perceived ; the 'Largo' with its alarmingly rapid-looking figures depends for its effect on the weighty crotchets of the first piano. In the cadenzas each performer is of course at liberty to take his own way. The next, 'Andante', requires the utmost care on the part of the second piano, which will be in constant danger of drowning with its ornamentation the lovely melody of the first ; at the same time, the little imitations of the theme the first piano is playing must be made quite distinct. In this, in my opinion, the first piano should use the pedal freely, the second not. The *martellato* touch of the next variation is in brilliant contrast with what has gone ; and in the

following variation, 'Allegro', the correct phrasing of the groups of quavers, the first dotted, will be grasped best if they are regarded as separate groups but as making up a whole bar of dotted triplets. Otherwise each group by itself will be apt to sound a little trivial. The variation marked 'Lugubre' demands considerable wealth of tone in the first piano whose long phrases are of primary importance. The lovely 'Andante' which follows is evidently to be taken with simplicity, but the first pianist must take care, after the second has come in, to make the semiquavers at the end of bars 5, 6, 7, and 8 short enough. From this to the end of the effective work there is little more to call for detailed notice.

Brief mention must be made of Parry's noble duet in E minor, in which the soul of Bach seems to have become reincarnated. While the ideas and their treatment are wholly original, yet the deft interweaving of parts in the slow movement, and the brusque fugue-subject in the finale, would have rejoiced Bach's heart.

The combination of two pianos is of very great use in becoming acquainted with orchestral works, and all the best and most successful scores are arranged (at least this is the case on the Continent) for such a combination. The use of a second

piano for the accompaniments of concertos, though important in its way, scarcely comes within the scope of this book, since the office of the subordinate player is to subject himself entirely to the soloist, or to correct him if he makes a false entry in playing from memory. The 'Rondo' of Chopin for two pianos belongs to this class of composition, for the second piano has no opportunity whatever for individuality of interpretation, and ensemble is not needed, except in so far as keeping time is concerned.



BOOK II

VOCAL ENSEMBLE



## CHAPTER IV

### ENSEMBLE IN CHORAL MUSIC

THAT there is room for fine manipulation of the different parts in a chorus will hardly be denied even by those whose training of choirs shows that they themselves have no practical knowledge of the fact. With almost all classes the mere performance of the notes in right time and tune, and with the desired amount of light and shape, is considered enough for all practical purposes. The infant school children who struggle with 'Three Blind Mice' are no more ignorant of what is meant by concerted singing than are the members of some of the north-country choral societies, who devote their energies to getting prizes in musical competitions, who are well aware how very little regard would be paid by most of the judges to delicate effects of ensemble, and who are never encouraged to attempt anything in the shape of real ensemble. For the tendency of the day in these quarters is towards feats of prodigious difficulty in the matter of the mere reading of the notes; certain young

composers find a ready market for part-songs in which no musical quality whatever can be discerned, unless the presence of unexpected accidentals all over the page can be counted as a merit. The wonderful accomplishment of these north-country choirs makes one long that they should once more be introduced to music of the madrigal school, in which every bar requires true concerted singing, and a bad ensemble makes the whole sound dull and commonplace. The madrigal depends on a continual give-and-take between the different voices, whether there is one singer to each part or more.

As in orchestral music, so in music sung by a number of voices, it is not the fault of the performers themselves if a bad ensemble is obtained; it is the conductor who must bear the blame, and very few indeed among even the best choral conductors are properly cognizant of what can be done in the way of concerted singing as opposed to the broad effects of light and shade, and the sudden contrasts in which the Handelian choruses abound. It is obvious that faults and merits of the kind we are considering are more conspicuously shown up when there is no accompaniment; so that no apology need be offered for dealing with this class of music first. A few practical

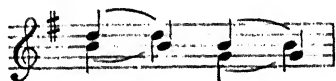
hints may be given, the consideration of which will, I think, improve the standard of choral singing even among the clever north-country people. Certain tendencies are inherent in the human singer, and not all of these are even referred to by the average conductor. One is that the choir if asked to sing softly will almost certainly sing slower than before. This is a fault that is indeed often spoken of by conductors, but there are many others which come from no moral depravity but from purely physical causes. In very early stages of choral singing, it will happen that one part must hold on a note, or repeat it, while other parts descend. The holding part, as it may be called, will show a strong tendency to flatten here; a very well-known example is in the third strain of Pearsall's 'O who will o'er the downs so free', where the bass repeats the tonic of the key until the harmonies change it into the seventh of the dominant chord. Bases that can be taught to overcome the temptation to get flat here have already advanced some way towards good choral singing. Another difficulty, of a purely physical kind, is where voices cross over each other; it often happens that two soprano parts must interchange places for a few notes, and at such points there will always be found



a difficulty of getting each away from the other. The middle note between the crossing parts will almost certainly be heard during the transit. Here again there is no depravity, but the vibrations have a tendency to come together and have to be, as it were, forced apart by a conscious effort. It is easy to devise special exercises for overcoming this, such as the following, the study of which will save time in the end:



A device very similar to this will be found in Mr. George Rathbone's pretty cantata for children, 'The Singing Leaves':



Similar exercises should be given to each pair of parts that lie adjacent to each other.

Few conductors know how much of faulty intonation comes from a misunderstanding of the intervals of the untempered scale. All advanced choirs should be told where the major and minor tones occur in the major scale, even if they need not study the exact difference between a diatonic and a chromatic semitone. Of course such

instruction can only be given where the singers are advanced enough to practise without a piano.

A good exercise, though it is not altogether easy to make it clear to uneducated musicians, is to take this sequence of notes



first as in the key of B flat, rising to its key-note (s, l, t, d), and then to regard F as the key-note and take the same notes downwards (as f, m, r, d). In the first the note G should be just perceptibly lower in pitch than in the second phrase, for the major scale begins with a major tone and goes on with a minor tone, while the second half of the scale, leading up to the key-note, begins with a minor tone from the dominant, followed by a major tone from the submediant to the leading note. The true values of the intervals for the minor scale may be found from the text-books.

A very fruitful source of singing out of tune is, alas, due not to physical but to mental causes; there are solo singers of high reputation who must needs lower their pitch and sing flat whenever they wish to be peculiarly emotional; it is almost always the major third of the key that goes down, and the leading note, too, is apt to

get flattened. It is a good rule of thumb to make all rising intervals as large as they will bear, all falling intervals as small. It is strange to notice how some of the physical peculiarities connected with singing have actually given laws to harmony and composition. It is a well-ascertained fact that it is possible and even easy to sing again a note lately sung, if nothing has been sung between, even though there should be an interval of time during which the harmonic aspect of the note may have completely changed. It is this, no doubt, which led to the laws and privileges of suspensions and the preparation of discords. But this is a subject beyond our present scope. The important question of balance must be faced by every choirmaster. Happy are those who have a sufficiency of tenors, and happier still those who have not to deal with a number of elderly ladies who will sing soprano, and whose enthusiasm grows as their voices fail. ~ Granting the absence of such practical and inevitable defects as are here referred to, and supposing that a choir can be formed anew, it is perhaps worth while to notice that the soprano and bass parts may quite well be slightly more powerful than the inner parts.

[The kind of music which interests most a choir

that is competent to perform it is that of the Madrigal, too generally neglected by modern choral societies. Every madrigal, it may be confidently asserted, requires real ensemble to do it justice, and every one has numerous points where the preponderance of the parts gives as much opportunity for thought as any instrumental music can do. I propose to go through one of the finest and best known of our English madrigals, as instrumental compositions of various kinds have been analysed, so as to see the passages at which a good ensemble is most urgently required. Orlando Gibbons's 'O that the learned poets' will serve as well as any other, and all the more so since it begins with two contrasting themes to the same words, and therefore is a good deal more complex than the majority of fugues. The first soprano has a smooth long phrase against which the second sopranos sing the main subject of the madrigal in shorter and more expressive notes. In the former part an even tone is all that is wanted; the latter should rise to its climax with a slight crescendo in the second bar according to the usual custom in a phrase of this kind; the example thus set must be followed in the succeeding change of parts, where, be it observed, the first sopranos come in with the main theme at

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a later period of the other theme than was the case before. In like manner the alto and tenor must maintain the contrasting character of the two themes, and the basses must imitate the altos. The theme in short notes may always be brought well out, and phrased according to the pattern set by the second sopranos at first. Where the first passage of quavers comes in in the first sopranos it must be kept in the background, as it is a mere episode, but the various entries at 'Who in a lovesick line' must be firm and perfectly legato. At 'would not consume' the alto has the principal part, and the succeeding passage for the three upper parts must be very delicately taken, being appropriately sung soft by all three. At the words 'but with deep care some better subject seek' the mood changes to one of a rich sonority, preparing us for the exquisite running passage at 'for if their music please'. Here the words are of supreme importance, and from the sonorous passage just referred to, it is pardonable to take the measure a little slower than before. The rich and impressive close of the whole needs no great care, as it may be left to the singers' feelings to do it rightly. This is just an outline of the effects that may legitimately be made in the course of any of the madrigals. There are

a great number of other things, foremost among which are the delicate little rallentandos which are traditional at the cadences, as for instance at bars 6-7, where the altos, though they have not the cadence themselves, must keep back so as to let the cadence be heard in the other parts. At bar 15 all parts but the tenor must be gathered as it were into a sonorous chord, upon which the tenor lead can be effectively made; at bar 32 again the same thing happens before the little three-part passage. Bars 38-9, the cadence at 'hateful rhyme' must be so managed that the basses, who enter with a fresh theme, shall draw back while the others are making the slight rallentando. Of course the climax of the running quavers which make the most delightful part of the madrigal is on the syllable 'earth' in all parts except the alto at first. Bars 11-12 from the end, at 'earthly things' the upper parts must be subordinated to the basses who start the noble ascending theme which provides the material for the close. It is perhaps not necessary that a madrigal conductor should be familiar with the laws of modal counterpoint and know his modes and their possibilities; but it is eminently desirable that he should be able to detect the modal part in any madrigal, since that

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part will probably have the most important share of every 'point', &c. Here, as very often, that part is the tenor; it is to be recognized as the part which falls by one degree upon the key-note or 'final' of the mode.

Of the two other forms of secular unaccompanied music, the glee and the part-song, the former belongs strictly to the next chapter, in which music for concerted solo voices will be considered; for the glee should always be sung with not more than one voice to each part. The part-song, on the other hand, is better sung by a choir than by single voices. It is of course of very high antiquity, and for a time ran side by side with the madrigal form, being rather more free in its structure than the madrigal, but a good deal less free in the movement of its parts. The danger in part-songs for the composer is that the inner parts will become as dull as a modern hymn-tune; yet the feeling of a 'song' with a definite melody in the topmost part should always be kept, whether the other parts move about or remain on one note. The form is so easy of attainment and often so popular with uneducated audiences, that it is no cause for wonder if the name has lost some of the prestige which attaches to other forms. What we may

call the song with vocal instead of piano accompaniment has now given place in large measure to a new type of composition, especially designed no doubt for the north-country singers who have attained such marvellous facility in reading. These part-songs sometimes amuse the conductors, and no doubt have amused their authors to make; but the more intelligent of the good readers, who think nothing of singing them correctly after one practice, are well aware of their aridity and musical worthlessness. Between these two types of part-song there is happily a great number of very beautiful compositions conforming more or less strictly to the part-song type. There are several books by Brahms, of which the finest, Op. 104, consists of five songs for six, five, and four voices. All these want good ensemble in every bar. In the first, 'Nachtwache I', the soprano and two alto parts begin with a dialogue with the tenor and two basses, and all six parts have to be kept as light as possible, but with full suggestion of the ghostlike solemnity of the poem. The rapid modulations which occur in the middle of the piece are an excellent test of a choir's proficiency, and at the word 'seufzend' an exquisite effect is made by letting the lower voices begin their sigh as the



upper ones leave it off, so that at the lowest point of the diminuendo in the one set, the louder commencement of the sigh is heard in the other. Of 'Nachtwache II', with its watchword 'Ruh'n sie?' flung to and fro, it is difficult to speak with moderation, so high is the spiritual and poetical level attained in its twenty-one bars. If the watchword is given out with good volume of sound, and the words are properly enunciated, the first part will go well; and in regard to the words it is satisfactory for English choirs to know that the late Canon Gorton made a first-rate translation which is published by Messrs. Simrock. In the middle portion, 'Hörst du', the syncopations must be taken very accurately, and where all six parts combine in the same words two bars later a splendid effect of tone should be produced. The close, from this onwards, must be maintained at a forte as marked, not allowed to die away at the cadence. The other songs in the set require the utmost delicacy, and the last, 'Ernst ist der Herbst', must be done with sonorous tone and due gravity on the part of the singers. Our own composers have produced no small number of excellent works in the part-song form; Stanford's 'Elizabethan Pastorals' begin with a delightful 'Corydon, arise!' in which the perfect pattern of

the type is set. The lovers are each impersonated by two sections of the four-part choir, and each has to alternate light, rhythmical passages in which the words must be made very distinct, with more sonorous notes. The piece is so carefully marked that it is impossible to go wrong if proper attention is paid to the directions by the conductor. In Parry's 'If I had but two little wings' we have another ideal part-song, for while the melody is kept in the upper part, yet there is never any lack of interest in the lower. A good deal of expression that is almost dramatic can be put into both these songs, and the rest of both sets are full of interest. The competition festival movement is gaining ground all over the kingdom to such a degree that some practical hints to amateur conductors of choirs may not be out of place, though they may not be strictly speaking needed in a book on concerted music. Still, as I have explained in my introduction, the transference of responsibility from many performers to one conductor does not remove the necessity for as good an ensemble as can be obtained ; and in these competitions nothing 'pays' so well as a good ensemble, even though no one in the audience may be able to put a name to the quality. The severest tests on these occasions

are of course unaccompanied part-songs and madrigals; the actual constitution of the choir is a very important thing, for while in some parts of the country sopranos abound, the contralto voice is the commoner among the women of another district, and there are actually said to be places where a good supply of tenors can be found. It must for ever be a problem how best to keep the balance of the voices at the right point, so that one part of the choir shall not overpower the rest. It is almost tragic to consider the sad case of some enthusiastic soprano with whom time has not dealt lightly, but who never misses a rehearsal, or fails to impart to the general tone that quality which is most aptly compared to a slate pencil; to expel her seems a piece of wanton cruelty, and her probably faultless skill in reading may actually be of use in the initial stages of preparation. If she could be persuaded to occupy a seat in the very best part of the audience for the performance, or to allow herself to be enrolled among the contralti, there would be a minimum of ill-feeling and no damage done to the tone of the choir, since in the contralto part a venerable dame can do but little harm; even though she may be addicted to singing the great arias of the Queen of Night in private. How to

with superannuated contraltos is not so easy to suggest, and in time the influx of elderly men will make the contralto part appear too prominent to the ear as well as to the eye. The male voice, it would seem, remains at a certain level of mediocrity for a longer time after its first prime has worn off than is the case with women; the familiar story seems worth repeating of an old chorister in some cathedral choir who might think himself badly used when he and others were pensioned off. His choirmaster, gently reasoning with him, at last said, 'Well, you know, you can't sing,' and got the reply 'But we never could!' It is a question whether the conductor should himself be an expert singer; if he is, his work will be comparatively easy, as he can give practical illustration of how a phrase should be given out as to suit the mood of the piece. He will naturally be tempted to favour the possessors of his own kind of voice; there have been several eminent conductors of choral societies who have had good tenor voices; in their choirs the tenors will nearly always be slightly too prominent, and their phrasing is likely to be markedly better than that of the other voices. These conductors are apt to irritate basses who are rather proud of their low notes by apologizing for making

them repeat over and over a passage in which these low notes are used, as feeling that what is impossible for themselves must be difficult for the bass members of the choir. But while basses do not mind how long they are kept on their low notes, it is little short of a crime to make the sopranos keep up on the heights merely to secure correct intonation on a high passage, or for the sake of getting some particular kind of tone. I once heard the sopranos of a very hard-working choir told to sing several times over a phrase in which several high G's occurred in succession; without intermission these poor ladies had to deliver seventeen or eighteen high G's with no single moment of relief. If the conductor be not a singer himself, he should have some practical knowledge of what is meant by the term *tessitura*. This term means what is called the 'lie' of a vocal phrase, not the height or depth of its extreme notes, but the frequency of their occurrence; a good writer for the voice will avoid the fault of giving high notes in succession, by interspersing lower notes to give relief to the vocal apparatus and to serve as a kind of springing-board to rise with fresh energy to another high note. A careful examination of the vocal score of any of the stock Italian operas will reveal exactly what a perfect

*tessitura* means; and it is very curious to notice how very few of the English composers of the nineteenth century seem to have an idea of writing for the voice so as not to tire it. Even a master of comic opera like Sullivan was often careless or oblivious of the physical requirements of his singers' organs, and among the soprano songs in the Savoy operas are to be found examples of the worst possible *tessitura*.

It is important that a choral conductor should know when he can safely ask one division of his choir to sing by themselves; the rest gives comfort to the other parts of the choir, but if it is employed in whisperings, it is worse than useless; sometimes, too, the difficulty is not one of the actual notes of the single part, but a real problem of ensemble, arising from the interlacing of two or more parts. But before all else, it is necessary for the conductor to settle upon the reading he is going to get his choir to give. It is the conductor who must make a mental picture of what the part-song or madrigal is all about, and who must make sure that he himself understands the words. For all part-songs worthy the name have as their basis some poetical or suggestive idea; and this must be grasped before any progress can be made in teaching them to the members. The careful

planning of the effects that are to be given is a very important thing; the mere making of points upon a background of uninteresting singing never yet won the approval of any competent judge, and a complete conception, even if it be not very striking, will make itself felt as a better thing than a number of isolated points that are without appreciable connexion with each other or with any general conception. It is well as a rule to choose one point of each part-song or perhaps of each stanza, which is to serve as the chief climax of the whole, and then to arrange the other points so as to throw this chief one into the best light. In the typical madrigal, as I have tried to explain, the effects are made in each part for itself, and here the greatest care must be taken that each phrase, or 'point', should be interpreted by all the parts in the same way; to attain this, it is a good plan to take each phrase separately, to transpose it to a pitch which will suit all voices, and then to make the whole choir sing it in unison, until their manner of phrasing it is identical. But in most part-songs such refinements as these are not urgently required, as the points are made by all voices together.

It hardly need be pointed out that the ideal conductor's nerves and temper must be well

under control. Even the most equable natures can hardly help getting ruffled when at some practice that is expected to be extra useful, nearly all the tenors stay away, or when people come so late and go so early that the greater part of the practice is hindered by a continual rustling; there is a kind of epidemic that seizes choirs so that when any one goes out or comes in, the attention of every one is riveted on the interruption and diverted from the conductor. The epidemic, in another form, is familiar to every one who travels by train; should a passenger in any class open his handbag, every eye in the carriage will be scanning such of the contents as may be revealed. The curious thing is that no amount of good-breeding or consideration for others seems to have the slightest effect in stopping either habit, which must be in a measure subconscious.

Some conductors of uncertain temper are so vexed when members of their choir are absent that they often address those who are present in angry tones, complaining of the slackness in attendance and quite forgetting that those they address are exactly the members who are not in fault. It is difficult to suggest what kind of manner is the best to adopt towards members of a choir; but this much is certain, that while



too great leniency and too great severity are both to be avoided, care must be taken to show that the conductor is in earnest about his work, and fully competent at every point to undertake it. Nothing impresses a choir so much as the conviction that their choirmaster knows the music thoroughly and has at his command the means for realizing his wishes. The one thing that should be most sparingly used is sarcasm; to sneer habitually at a choir is a certain road to failure, and it might be suggested perhaps that even the mildest sarcasm should only be indulged in if the conductor is in a perfectly good temper. If he feels cross or upset, then let him eschew even the most harmless banter; and let him always adopt the attitude of a fellow-worker with his singers, not that of a superior person who is bored to death with the duty of drumming music into thicker skulls than his own.

Passing now to choral music with orchestral accompaniment, in the course of oratorios, whether by Handel or others, there is generally more opportunity for dramatic expression than we have found in unaccompanied music. It is the drawback of the oratorio tradition that so very often the worshippers of false gods have so much the best of it from a musical point of view. The

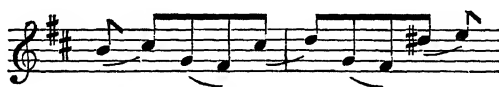
'Baal' choruses in *Elijah* and 'O be gracious' in *St. Paul* reach a level that Mendelssohn did not always attain, but happily the same cannot be said of the devils in *The Dream of Gerontius*, who, by the way, are generally allowed to exaggerate their snarling tone a good deal more than is desirable. A very difficult sudden contrast between the dramatic and the contemplative styles is required in many places in the two Passions of Bach, notably in the *St. Matthew*, where the chorus, 'Lord, is it I?' has to be immediately followed by the chorale, 'My sin it was that bound Thee'.

It would be manifestly impossible to pass even in rapid survey the whole range of choral music including oratorios and cantatas of all kinds; but it may be useful to analyse, from the point of view of choral ensemble, Bach's great Mass in B minor, a work which is generally held to reach the highest point of choral music, whether in regard to technical difficulty or to its continuous sublimity of mood. The choir that can sing this work adequately need fear no problem that is contained in music.

#### ~~BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR~~

A majority of the great choruses of the Mass are in five parts (S.S.A.T.B.), so that the con-

ductor's first duty is to make the balance right, whether by adding to the number of the sopranos, or by allowing the altos and tenors occasionally to reinforce each other in prominent passages. There was perhaps too much of this little expedient when the Mass was first sung in England under Otto Goldschmidt, for the amateurs who were formed into the Bach Choir were remarkable for intelligence rather than for sonorous voices, and the high passages for tenor and the low ones for alto were only to be realized by mutual accommodation. The four bars which start the work require much more than the mere volume of voice by which so many of Handel's effects were gained; the group of rising quavers in the second soprano, tenor, first soprano and second soprano, must be phrased exactly in the same way, so that the impression of helplessness is conveyed simultaneously with the desire for mercy. The theme of the fugue should convey, in a lesser degree, the way in which the pairs of quavers are played by the strings of the orchestra :



and of course the phrasing adopted must be followed in all the vocal parts as well as in the

instrumental. Shortly before the close in F sharp minor, and the instrumental interlude, there is a place where the two sopranos cross in this same phrase; careful observance of the slurs as given above will do more to keep the two parts distinct than the accents with which the whole number is freely besprinkled in certain modern editions of the work. In these editions it is often difficult to see the wood for the trees, and nearly always the climax of the movement is obscured by the details of phrasing imposed by the commentators who have prepared the edition. In the rapid progress of the vogue of Bach's music among us, we have now reached a stage where there seems a danger of exaggerating effects and contrasts of tone, owing to the dreadfully lifeless fashion which once prevailed of plodding straight through without colour, expression, or variation of any kind. The third number of the Mass, the second 'Kyrie', presents a special difficulty in the intonation of its first three notes. The interval between the second and the third, G natural and E sharp in the bass and alto parts, D natural and B sharp in the tenor and soprano, will almost certainly be made too large (and the whole consequently flattened) unless the singers keep in mind the pitch of the first note of the

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theme throughout, and make the second and third notes exactly a semitone above and below it respectively. A useful exercise is to sing it a few times thus :



Even when these notes have been perfectly tuned there is another difficulty, that of getting the G sharp, which follows in the next bar, sharp enough ; this, like the D sharp in the tenor and soprano answers, must be consciously 'pushed up' by the singers. In all similar cases—and there are many of them in the Mass—it is desirable to exaggerate the difference between such notes as A natural and A sharp (see bars 8 and 9 of the tenor part), or E natural and E sharp (bar 17, alto part). Conductors often attribute the common fault of singing out of tune to the weather, to the choir's being tired, or to any other cause but their own failure to induce the singers to use conscious endeavour to get the pitch right.

*Gloria.*

Before attacking the 'Gloria', it will probably be found that the singers, the conductor, and most of those concerned, have different theories of pronouncing the Latin text, notably the word 'excelsis'. 'Exelsis', 'exkelsis', 'ekshelsis',

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‘etche<sup>h</sup>lsis’, and ‘extche<sup>h</sup>lsis’, may be quoted as specimens of the different ways of pronouncing this word. It clearly will not do to take this word alone in the old-fashioned and indefensible ‘English’ way, when all the other words are assimilated as nearly as possible to the ecclesiastical method of pronunciation; nor is the modern scholastic method any more satisfactory or historically correct. The third and fourth of the examples given above belong almost exclusively to the Italian and French methods respectively, and there can be little doubt that the practice of the Catholic Church, represented in the last of the above specimens, is preferable to all the rest. For, little as Bach’s Mass suits the Roman Office, the words of this, as of all sung masses, are most suitably pronounced according to ecclesiastical usage. The first part of the ‘Gloria’ presents little difficulty beside this, for there is no need to control the rapture which every rational singer must feel in taking part in the work. The change of movement and character at the words ‘Et in terra pax’ will be taken by each conductor in his own way, but the entry of the choral parts will be as difficult in one way as in another. The basses start on the high D, not an easy note for them to attack softly and neatly, and at the

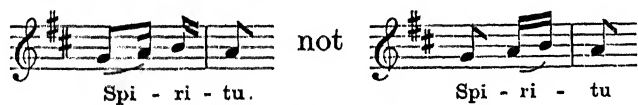
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half-beat directly afterwards the other three parts steal in, as if peace were gradually diffusing itself over the world. The pairs of quavers must be slurred in instrumental and vocal parts alike; at the fugal entry later on, the runs must be kept perfectly smooth so that an effect of quiet contentment and well-being is produced, in spite of the technical difficulties that abound in the actual notes sung. The details of the florid passages are again the chief difficulty in the next chorus, 'Gratias agimus', and, six bars before the end, there is in the bass part one of the groups of quavers which test the competence of the choir-master most severely. After the bar that seems to settle into B minor, with G sharp and A sharp, comes a transition to D major, and the notes named are replaced by A natural and G natural, the former of which is obvious to every singer; but the drop of a whole tone to the latter is very seldom clearly executed, as there are nearly always some members of the choir that fall into the easier and more conventional phrase with G sharp as an ornamental passing note. No. 8, 'Qui tollis', must be kept so low in tone that the two flute parts may be clearly felt as the leading features; when sung very softly it is of course hard to keep in tune, and there is every sort of

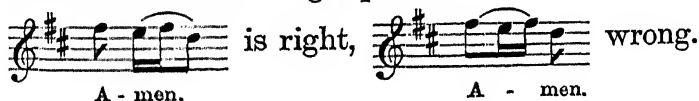
*Qui tollis.*

temptation to sing flat, for not only are the intervals difficult to get sharp enough, but there is a tendency in all but the best-trained voices to flatten slightly in the expressive passages. It is difficult, for example, for the tenors to press up the C natural in the third complete bar, and to come down from it to the G sharp by small enough intervals. Theirs is indeed the hardest part in this chorus, and bars 11, 24, and others are especially trying in the matter of intonation. If the sopranos have learnt the lesson of the second 'Kyrie' they will sing the same at bars 30-1 correctly, but the passage contains another difficulty in that the altos must cross them and rise to a G sharp directly after the trebles have sung G natural. In No. 11, 'Cum sancto Spiritu', come two examples of Bach's characteristic way of arranging his syllables, and both are often misinterpreted even by skilled festival choirs, for the time at the conductor's disposal is seldom or never enough to allow him to point out such minute details. It is

*Cum sancto Spiritu.*



and later on in the fugal portion





The sustained notes from the fifth bar onwards, and the splendidly rolling bass, must be given with full volume of tone. This magnificent chorus, in which almost every sort of difficulty is to be found, but which it is an even greater delight to sing than to hear, is the suitable and usual place for a short interval, as it concludes the great 'Gloria' section of the Mass.

*Credo.*

The opening of the 'Credo' is another of the tests of the careless choir-trainer. The tenors end bar 4 with the note G, which has no accidental before it; the feeling of the beginning is distinctly that of A major, but the signature is that of two sharps only, the fact being that the chorus is strongly influenced by the Mixolydian mode. The G before mentioned looks as if it were G sharp, in view of the succeeding passage in bar 5, and it is only the few choirmasters who realize the importance of impressing upon their singers the necessity of making the note G natural. The same thing occurs in bar 10 in the first soprano part, but as a G natural has just been sung by the altos, there is less danger of going wrong. The wonderful place, starting at bar 33, where the basses have the theme in augmentation, that is, in notes of double the original length, is apt to draw off the attention not only of the

audience but that of the conductor, from the other parts, with their overlapping entries. Bars 38-9 contain the hardest thing the first sopranos have to do, in the scale containing D sharp and F natural ; it is scarcely possible to accomplish the passage by the usual methods of 'thinking in the key' first of E minor and then of D minor, but the notes must be learnt by rote, and it will be wise to practise them an octave lower as they lie in an awkward part of the soprano voice. In the second 'Credo' the basses, and the other voices in succession, must strive for a smoothly sonorous and accented delivery of the theme, while the accompanying voices, growing fewer as each of the parts becomes involved in the fugue, may be allowed something that is nearly a staccato. The passage beginning at bar 69, 'visibilium', demands a change of character, as if it were a quiet coda after the fugue had reached its close ; but some conductors make so sharp a contrast of tone and volume that all continuity is sacrificed. The extraordinary series of choruses which embrace the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Last Judgement, provide also the ideal tests of choral proficiency. To sing 'Et incarnatus' in perfect tune, the 'Crucifixus' with proper expression, and 'Et resurrexit' with con-

trol and the required power of climax, is no slight feat.

*Et incarnatus.*

At every crotchet of 'Et incarnatus' the singers should try to listen to the intonation of the other parts; the first difficulty is the B sharp for the basses in bar 9, which it is tempting to turn into a C, and so to flatten the whole. The entries of the 'Crucifixus' seem at first almost impossible, but once learnt they abide with the singers for ever, and the intonation is not quite as difficult as in the foregoing chorus. The inspired ending of the 'sepultus est', with its unexpected transition to G major at the close, depends on the chromatic passages in the bass part for its intonation. Happily the throb of the double-basses supports the singers here, but even with this, it is necessary to remember to make the descending semitones as small as possible, and those which ascend as large as they will bear.

*Et resurrexit.*

The opening phrase of 'Et resurrexit' may be sung with little care as to the phrasing, as a burst of joy; but the successive entries of the theme after the instrumental interlude must sound as if they were full of meaning, and the runs must be very smooth. At bar 58, in the passage where the tenors and the second sopranos shout 'ascendit' against one another, there is another

place where the characteristic arrangement of the syllables is generally neglected by conductors; notice 'coelum' in the first soprano, bars 60 and 62, and 'sedet' in the same part in bar 63. In the glorious passage for the basses alone, 'Et iterum venturus', the syllables require attention if Bach's meaning is to be brought out; notice the word 'vivos' at its first appearance and how the arrangement of the syllables helps to make it vivid and really impressive.

Of all the magnificent choruses in the work, *Confiteor*. the 'Confiteor' stands the highest in the estimation of many of those who have studied it most deeply. It was given to Bach alone among mankind to weave many voices into a fabric of such richness and depth of meaning. In him the art of the old madrigalists seems to reach a new perfection, and in such a chorus as this, or the 'Grave' movement of the organ Fantasia in G, we are overwhelmed rather by the beautiful intricacy of the pattern than by the interest of any single thread of melody. For seventy-two bars the five parts are interwoven, and then comes the great moment when the basses and altos in close canon bring in the ecclesiastical plain-song in addition to all the rest. When the tenors have it in augmentation we are apt to wonder to what

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heights of intricacy we are to be led, when the whole quiets down to the bar marked 'adagio' before the thrilling 'Et expecto'; yet even at such a moment, mundane considerations like tune have to be dealt with. Music has hitherto given us nothing so eloquent or so masterly in design as the point at bar 137 where the first sopranos glide upwards, changing a C natural to a B sharp, and transforming a suggestion of the key of F major into a definite chord of the sixth on E sharp within a space of two bars. But Bach has more surprises for us in the burst of trumpets in the passage where 'vivace ed allegro' stands above the beginning of bar 147; we should have expected the change of tempo to be indicated half a bar before, when the first sopranos have their entry, but the effect is greater (as well as being, incidentally, more modern) if these two crotchets are taken as Bach indicates, at the slow tempo, and the quick movement taken up at the beginning of the bar. The reposeful moment at bar 163 where something like the madrigalist's 'point' is made, is of the greatest possible service as relief from the stress of what has gone before, and we regain our breath for the triumphant close, from which we are as yet separated by many bars and, as if we

required to be brought to earth again, by one of the worst 'pitfalls' in the way of difficult passages; the basses at bar 193 have not only to sing, from their high E downwards, the notes A, G sharp, and E, instead of the obvious arpeggio, E, B, G sharp, and E, but their following run has a little anomaly towards the end where the notes A and B are repeated.

A conductor who values his choir's voices and *Sanctus.* who realizes the amount of spiritual, mental, as well as physical exhaustion entailed in singing the 'Confiteor' will give a slight pause, quite justified on ecclesiastical grounds, before beginning the 'Sanctus' with its wonderful groups of triplets and its octave descent in the bass parts. No degree of smoothness can be attained which will be too much for the waving triplets, and no sonority in the octaves will be exaggerated. A very moderate tempo will be enough, for the steady progress of the bass part must not lose its dignity; nor must the 'pleni sunt coeli' be confused by being taken too fast. So perfectly do the words find their complement in the music that the effect of this part of the chorus is that of magnificent elaboration without density or confusion, as when Isaiah first heard the words in that vision of the glory of the Lord, where 'His train filled the temple'.

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*Osanna.*

The eight-part 'Osanna' strikes out a new line in this work, for it is a regular double chorus, the one choir breaking in with animated hosannas while the other is engaged with florid passages of great elaboration. Just before the close, the single choirs answer each other in short passages marked 'piano' by Bach, but now apt to be obscured by the 'effects' of modern editions. The instrumental 'ritornello' at the close need not be played both before and after the 'Benedictus', though the 'Osanna' must be repeated; it is better to leave out the ritornello

*Dona nobis.*

at its first appearance. Of the last chorus, 'Dona nobis pacem', there is nothing to be said, since it is a literal repetition of 'Gratias agimus'; at the same time, most sympathetic singers will unconsciously give it a richer colour, as though the experience of all the rest of the glorious work had expanded and uplifted their souls, even though it will have tired their voices.

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## CHAPTER V

### MUSIC FOR SOLO VOICES IN COMBINATION

THIS class of music corresponds to the instrumental class that is called *par excellence* 'ensemble music'; there is no need to discuss the amount of ensemble that is necessary here or in the other class, since it is obvious to every one that the quality is all-essential to success. Vocal music of this kind is of course far less complicated than instrumental music such as quartets and trios, but it is unfortunately true that the average singer has but very little idea of how to sing concerted music or of the main factor to be considered in developing a 'reading' of any concerted vocal piece. Whether in the form of a duet, a trio, quartet, or 'glee' for any number of solo singers, the first thing to decide is the very simple question of what is intended to be conveyed by the words. Are they in any sort a dialogue or short dramatic scene, in which each voice is to represent a different character; or is the music impersonal, its message conveyed through two or

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more singers instead of one? It is odd to see how constantly, in performance, even this very elementary question has not been faced, since on its settlement depends the whole interpretation of the music. There is every excuse for this indifference, for in the stress of modern professional life there is but little time to study the special points that are needed for even simple duets, and even the quartet from *Rigoletto*, with which it was once the custom to conclude all popular or miscellaneous concerts, is now happily confined to the operatic stage. Concerted singing in public other than operatic has unfortunately almost ceased to exist; with the brilliant exception of the 'Folk-song Quartet', London is at present without any organized body of singers who cultivate concerted singing as a speciality; and as such it must be cultivated if it is to be successful. The mere casual participation of two singers in a duet just to make an unusual finish to a concert, is worse than useless in an artistic sense; since it generally means that it has been rehearsed in the few moments that can be spared from solo practice, and all considerations of true ensemble have been left out of account. Where the singers are operatic artists, there is another fault that will probably be felt by discriminating hearers; that

the concerted vocal piece is taken as it would be taken on the stage, with the 'colour' laid on with a trowel, with more of the clash of individualities than is required for the concert-room, and with no attempt whatever to blend the voices together. It is this blending which underlies the ideal performance of concerted vocal music. The perfect blending of two voices would require that if they sang a note in unison, the overtones produced by each would be exactly identical, so that it would be impossible to tell by the ear alone whether one or two singers were performing. It is probable that this perfection of identity has never happened in the world, for all voices have their own 'quality', that is to say, every singer chooses (of course unconsciously) certain of the theoretical series of upper partials for special emphasis in the notes he utters, and in all tested cases there is a slight variety of quality in any two voices singing in unison. For this reason, it is never a good plan to let two individuals sing in unison, for at every turn the differences of personality obtrude themselves; when a third joins in, the differences, strange to say, are much less felt, as the collective effort replaces the individual. But in the effort to blend with other voices, a good result can generally be obtained if

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the singers have learnt to sing with what is called the *voix blanche*, and to keep their tone clean from anything like strong individuality, or what is popularly known as 'colour'. The art of colouring the voice is in no danger of being forgotten, for it is regarded as of infinite importance by critics and those who aim at success in vocal recitals and the like. Ambitious singers would for the most part prefer to be accepted as interpreters of the great songs rather than as the possessors of faultlessly produced voices, so that the teachers' endeavours are now almost entirely devoted to inducing the student to give 'colour' to his songs. The ruin of the voice in the process is regarded as a slight misfortune which may happen to anybody; for teachers and learners are alike ignorant of the truth that if the voice had been properly trained at first it would have stood even the trial of acquiring this 'colour'. It would be possible, if a little ill-natured, to describe colour, in this sense, as simply a variety of bad singing; for every shade of 'colour', even the faintest, means some slight departure from the purity of the *voix blanche*, the exercise of which can do nothing but good to the vocal powers. It is to be noticed that by the 'voix blanche' I mean nothing but the purest vocal tone, without any forcing,

expression, or perceptible affectation. There is a kind of horrible and spurious *voix blanche*, indulged in for the most part by elderly music-hall singers when they imitate the manner in which little girls are supposed to sing. This is, I need hardly say, not the true *voix blanche*, which is a very important step towards the acquirement of the perfect *bel canto*. (I am sorry to use so many un-English expressions, but my meaning can only be made quite clear if the terms in ordinary use are employed.)

It is not for the benefit of the singer's health that this way of singing is to be recommended, but because the 'colourless' style of singing produces tones that are most fully provided with those overtones on which quality depends, and it stands to reason that the richer any two or more voices are in overtones, the greater is the chance of many of these overtones being identical and the reinforcing effect being all the greater. With the introduction of vocal 'colour', there enter in all sorts of harmonic details that are not as a rule part of the regular scheme of overtones, so that two 'coloured' voices will find very few overtones where perfect identity is secured; their performance, though it may be in tune to ordinary ears, will have a jarring element in it,

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instead of the restful beauty that is present when two rightly blended voices are heard together.

*Duets.*

Now there is a whole department of concerted vocal music which needs nothing but perfect *bel canto* for its ideal interpretation. Nearly all the vocal duets of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Rubinstein are lyrical utterances, which might just as appropriately be sung by one singer as by two. Of this same class, too, are Dvořák's beautiful duets, 'Klänge aus Mähren', the work by which the composer's name was first known outside his native country. In these last, though the *voix blanche* is not of itself sufficient for a perfect performance, there is very little beyond it, and whatever colour is put in by the one singer, must be put in in exactly the same proportion by the other.

Here too we meet with one of those 'dialogue-duets' of which we have so many specimens in the older masters. 'Die Bescheidene' has very little of the dramatic about it, and it might be made perfectly ridiculous if it were turned into an operatic love-scene; but while tone must never be sacrificed (the upper part, especially, must preserve the *voix blanche* throughout), yet there is a certain warmth to be put into the lower parts which makes it stand out from the other. In

Mendelssohn's 'Zuleika and Hassan' the tenor has only eight bars to sing by himself, and here the opening phrase of the soprano is deftly altered for the ardent lover, so that without any great departure from vocal purity, the singer will naturally and unavoidably sing the phrase in the proper way. The beautiful 'Tanzlied' of Schumann is the principal exception to the style of his other duets; here again, the upper voice must be pure in tone and the more brilliant in quality the better; the tenor must be a complete contrast to this, and in his solo part may put as much 'colour' as he can command into his part; this almost dramatic effect must, however, give place to a calmer feeling when the voices join together, or the whole thing will become absurd. It is this kind of joining together of different emotions that constitutes one of the chief difficulties of concerted singing. Probably no one sings Rubinstein's duets nowadays, but there is one, 'Die Turteltaube und der Wanderer', where colour may be introduced into both parts, but a more or less elegiac quality of tone will suit the situation and help as much as possible to disguise the weakness of the music.

In the best-known duet of Brahms, 'Die Schwestern', it is a matter for individual con-

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sideration how much colour should be put into the last verse to bring out the possibility of the event that is going to disunite the sisters. In my opinion, no difference of tone is necessary, since the composer has provided for the change in the music itself, and the idea will find its way into the hearers' minds if they are allowed to receive it quietly. 'Phänomen' in the same set, Op. 61, is one of the composer's loveliest inspirations, but it wants two voices that blend well and two singers who have time for study and some comprehension of poetry. The more dramatic set of duets, Op. 28, is remarkable because of the composer's art in so changing the aspect of his themes by harmonic treatment of various kinds, that the varying moods are conveyed without much need for violent emotions of any kind on the part of the singers. In 'Die Nonne und der Reiter', for example, the two parted lovers sing practically the same music and only at the close is there a short passage of tragedy. In 'Vor der Thür', too, on Brahms's favourite subject of a lover failing to get admission to his lady's room, the melodic shape of the solo parts is the same, but here a good deal of colour may be put into the baritone part, and some archness into the alto. Even in the duets which

are ostensibly so far dramatic in character that the two singers represent each a personage, there seems to be in many composers a tendency to treat them differently from the way in which such things would be treated in an opera. Even in such an amusing trifle as Clari's 'Musico ignorante', the characters are not kept up throughout, and in many of Purcell's duets individualization is not as well maintained as it is in the 'dialogue of Orpheus and Charon'. How much of imagination the hearers of his time were supposed to bring to bear on what they heard is shown by the fact that a duet 'What can we poor females do?' is to be sung by the usual pair of voices, soprano and bass. Perhaps the most difficult task that can be put before a singer is to fulfil the strange intention of Heinrich Schütz, who in his 'Auferstehung' gives the words of Mary Magdalene to two sopranos, those of Christ to an alto and tenor. It stands to reason that in each case the two voices must be as exactly assimilated to each other in quality as possible, yet the music must not be sung without expression. Concerted singing has one great merit, that it makes an artificial tremolo so absurd as to demonstrate its real ineffectiveness even to the unmusical hearer. If there is one



singer with a 'wobble' it is bad enough, but if both or all have the same defect, the ludicrous side of the performance cannot escape notice. For no two singers, however industrious, can be supposed capable of getting their tremolos to synchronize so exactly that they might be mistaken for one, and even if it were possible, such an effect would be almost funnier than the presence of two or more unrelated tremolos.

*Glees.*

A very good remedy for a too persistent tremolo is the old-fashioned glee, which requires, in its concerted portions, the most perfect unity of quality, and, in its occasional solos, as much individuality of style as may be wished. As these are sung without accompaniment, the way in which the voices reinforce one another, if they are of the right quality, is very beautiful, even if the class of music does not strike the hearer as meaning anything very particular. The way in which a good cathedral alto's voice will sometimes soar above the rest of the glee party, his tone being supported and strengthened by the singers below him, is a musical effect which is now seldom to be heard in perfection, and it is one peculiar to England.

*Trios.*

The same sharp division into two classes which we noticed in duets, occurs also in vocal

trios. Things like 'Lift thine eyes', Smart's once-popular 'O Memory', Walmisley's pretty 'Mermaids', and the numerous compositions for three female voices belong to the class in which pure quality of production is of far more importance than dramatic feeling, and due balance of strength than any great amount of individual artistic intelligence. In 'Lift thine eyes', it is perhaps worth noticing that the effect of the descending sixths about the middle is greatly enhanced if the middle part is sung by a contralto or mezzo-soprano rather than by a real soprano; in the latter case, some 'resultant' tones are generated in the two upper parts which are heard as notes at a distressingly high pitch; but this curious phenomenon is seldom or never present when the second part is sung by a contralto. Of non-operatic trios that yet demand dramatic power for their realization, Purcell's beautiful 'Saul and the Witch of Endor' may be mentioned as one of the earliest in existence, and one of the very finest, since each part is individualized with all the art of later times, while the effect of the whole is singularly impressive. There is only a short passage at the end in which the three sing together, but this is as eloquent and characteristic as all the rest, only with the exaggerated

style which some modern singers think fit to adopt when they want an effect, the trio might easily become grotesque. The charming little burlesque trio of Mozart, 'Das Bändchen', with its Viennese dialect, needs very neat singing, and the kind of skill in 'patter' songs that the old Savoy company acquired in such perfection. The bass is well differentiated from the two sopranos, but there is no special problem of ensemble to be solved. Beethoven's magnificent 'Tremate, empi' requires a heavy bass, and a soprano and tenor who are competent to sing florid music; in the beautiful adagio ten bars before the voices cease, there is a high G flat in the soprano part, followed in the tenor by a passage with two G naturals, to which succeeds another G flat in the soprano. Care must be taken by the soprano to take this note fully flat, and by the tenor to take his note fully sharp, so that the contradiction may be rightly felt. The style of the whole is of course purely operatic, and the emotional import a little obvious.

*Quartets.*

The vocal quartet is far richer as a class than any other form of concerted vocal music. This is due in great measure to the deserved popularity of Brahms's two sets of 'Liebeslieder', than which there is nothing more effective in the range of

music. The composer had prepared himself for this work by a set of three quartets published as Op. 31, the first of which is a setting of Goethe's 'Wechsellied zum Tanz', in which, to a minuet-measure, a pair of lover-dancers (alto and bass), eager for movement, are contrasted with a sentimental pair (soprano and tenor) who only want to make love. The former couple provide the main theme of the minuet, the latter the 'trio', all four voices being combined at the close with due maintenance of their characteristic desires. In 'Neckereien' the two male voices pursue and the two female threaten to elude them; the concerted part of the piece, where the triplets come in, is full of fun, and the mood of the whole will remind lovers of English music of the quartet in *The Gondoliers*, 'In a contemplative fashion', a piece that provides excellent practice in concerted singing. Coming now to the 'Liebeslieder', Op. 52, there are several details that make for a good performance. First of these is the right proportion between the vocalists and the two pianists. Although the score bears on its face the plain words 'with four voices *ad libitum*', few of the singers who essay the quartets ever think of letting the pianists do more than set the pace and support the voices. The players should meet

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together alone, and decide how they shall treat each waltz, or rather 'Ländler', for the dance is this slow kind of waltz, not the more rapid measure of later days. The tone of the whole thing can be set in the very first bar, by a player who knows where the secondary accent of the waltz-measure falls; the opening chords may be very slightly spread, the second beat of the bar emphasized ever so little, there being a just perceptible delay in giving the third beat. The melody in the left hand of the 'primo' player is the germ from which the whole number is developed, and the rest of the piano part as well as the male voices must be subordinated to it. Beyond a very small leaning on the first of the bar the singers have little to trouble about. In No. 2, the secret of the rhythm is to make the second and third crotchets of the second of each pair of bars very firm and distinct in all parts. No. 3 may give more prominence to the vocal parts, and the pianists may treat themselves as an accompaniment if they will; but No. 4 will be ruined unless the rhythm of the instrumental melody be kept well in front of the voice parts. Throughout No. 5 the right hand of the 'secondo' player has the most responsible part, since it alone has a single note on the second beat of each

bar. The direction *grazioso* for No. 6 is the key to its interpretation, which must be as delicately managed as possible. The staccatos in the first strain must not be too much clipped, and the legatos must be made as smooth as they can be, so that the arpeggios downwards and upwards almost have the effect of chords. The amount of staccato which the tenor singer will use so as to set the pattern for the others, must be left to his discretion. Observe that when the quartet take up the melody the word 'Vogel' is taken legato, not in two separate syllables as was the case when the tenor sang it alone. At the double-bar, at the words 'Leimruthen-Arglist' a more sonorous tone may be used by the male singers, while the pianists may make their staccatos as hard as they please. Notice the one slurred note at the very end of the bottom of the page, on which a good deal depends. On the resumption of the first strain, the tenor solo sings a legato accompaniment to the melody. Before the change into F major, the repeated A's in the piano part may be drawn back to a very slight extent, so that the exquisite passage, 'Der Vogel kam', may make its full effect. Notice that the signs for increase and decrease of tone differ in the vocal parts from those of the piano. The singers must make quite

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a small but very noticeable crescendo at 'eine schöne Hand', while the piano begins the crescendo two bars before and ends it two bars afterwards. The soprano must imitate the phrasing of the tenor in the opening phrase of this section as closely as possible. The beginning of the transition to A major, the chord of D minor in the 'primo' part, may be very slightly 'spread'. In No. 7 it is to be noticed (however much the fact may annoy the soprano or alto soloist) that the little piece is for pianoforte, with words as it were attached; in the last bar but one of each section the piano has an ornament (first a 'Pralltriller' and then a turn) which has no equivalent in the voice part, and there is another turn in the fourth bar of the second section, which may be taken quite deliberately by the pianist and without regard to the singer's convenience. In fact, the players must have it all their own way, and the singer must consent to follow them. In No. 8 the voices again make a background of the most lovely texture to the delicate passages of the piano; four bars before the close they occupy the front of the stage for a moment, and make that moment all the more effective in proper for their subordination before. In No. 9 the alto soloist is the principal person to be considered, the

'primo' of the piano being quite subordinate throughout the first section. In the second, 'Zehnerne Riegel', the bass, both vocal and instrumental, must be heavy, and indeed, if all six performers make all the noise they can for these eight or nine bars, it will be all right. A point that wants noticing in the piano part has already been referred to (pp. 131, 132), but may be repeated here; the 'secondo' does not finish up the opening phrase of the first melody, but its last note is filled in by the 'primo', who must take care to make the note as like his companion's as possible, but of course with a little extra tone. It should of course sound (though it very seldom does) as if the part were played by one person. No. 10 must be taken very gently by every one, so that the swaying movement may be just perceived and no more. The interchange between the soprano and tenor, hardly heard at first, becomes more prominent in the second section, 'O wie schön'. In No. 11, the vigorous 'Nein, es ist nicht auszukommen', it is surely excusable to phrase it as if it were a fast mazurka, rather than a Ländler; a slight emphasis on the third beat of the bar instead of the second will give the brilliant effect. As in all cases where most of the piece is staccato, the occasional legato

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passages must have full value. No. 12 may run on immediately without a break, and may be taken a very little more slowly, with added weight. Note the interpolated soft bits in three parts for the piano in the second section. In the duet No. 13 the 'primo' of the piano part is not to be played like unimportant twitterings, but as if it mattered; the 'secondo' alone is marked '*poco f.*', the voices and the 'primo' *f.* Of course the 'double three' time must be so mastered that the hearer is deceived as to the amount of difficulty or the place of the bars. It is well to proceed immediately with No. 14, in which the tenor is the principal personage; here even the 'primo' of the piano must keep comparatively low in tone, but in No. 15, which should run on continuously, the amount of piano tone may be increased, as the more brilliant the 'primo' part is made to sound, the greater will be the richness of effect in the other parts. No. 16 is an awakening from the languorous mood into which we have been brought, but its 'Lebhaft' should not be interpreted too literally. The change is one of emotion rather than of mere pace. The disposition of the vocal chord at the word 'stöhnen' in the second section gives an extraordinarily vivid colouring to the piece, which is

entirely due to the acoustics of the voices, and the art with which they are here used. No. 17 takes us back to the languid mood again, and here the voice may be the protagonist. The mezzo-staccato notes in the last six bars must be carefully managed in accordance with the markings, for the voice has only one break in continuity, in the middle of the word 'Auge', while all the chords of the piano are to be played in the half-detached way that is understood by the term 'legato-staccato'. No. 18, the finale of the set, must not be taken too fast. Of late years a tradition of singing it at a very rapid pace has sprung up; those who remember the early performances of the waltzes, by singers who had studied them with the composer, will remember that while the original pace is a good deal faster than the tenor solo just before, yet there is no feeling of hurry about it, which cannot be kept out of the second section, however skilful the pianists, if the very fast time be chosen. In this case, too, the ending of the whole becomes absurd, instead of a quiet dying-away of the mood.

It is unnecessary to go through the second set of waltzes, the 'Neue Liebeslieder', Op. 65, with the same minuteness; but it may be remarked that according to the title-page, and according to

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the inherent character of the music, the pianoforte part is throughout of relatively less importance than in the first set. This work escapes the fate of most sequels, for it is quite as fine as the first set, with rather a deeper emotional note in it; there is nothing in the first set that can compare with the sonorous and lovely epilogue, 'Nun, ihr Musen, genug', in which the swaying accompaniment just reminds us that the waltz-measure is still present, and the whole conception is lifted to a higher plane. Those who are competent to sing the 'Liebeslieder' can be trusted to make the most of these, and of the 'Zigeunerlieder', Opp. 103 and 112. Beside the four 'Gipsy Songs' in this latter collection, there are two of great interest, 'Sehnsucht' and 'Nächtens', the latter a difficult piece in quintuple time. For sonority, the special beauty of Brahms's vocal quartet-writing, nothing can equal the opening of 'O schöne Nacht', the first of a book of four quartets, Op. 92, and the last of a still earlier work, Op. 64, 'Fragen', presents us with a point of ensemble that is not quite obvious. A series of questions is asked by the other three voices, and answered by the tenor, whose part is throughout of paramount importance. Sometimes, as at the words 'gelingt kein Widerstand?', his phrase as it ceases is met

by a crescendo in the other parts, and here care must be taken to preserve a good balance. At the close of the quartet, where all the voices are soft together, it is worth noticing that the tenor, with his words, 'Ach, möcht' es bald geschehen', has still the prominent part, since his notes are in the best part of the voice, and also in the most effective place in each chord. In the last phrase, too, he has a turn at the end which as it were reminds us that he has been the chief speaker.

There are three works by Schumann for which a vocal quartet is required, though in none of them are the quartet portions as numerous as they are in the 'Liebeslieder' of Brahms. The best and most effective of the three is the 'Spanisches Liederspiel' to words by Geibel, which begins with three famous duets, 'Von dem Rosenbusch' (soprano and contralto), 'Und schläfst du, mein Mädchen' (tenor and bass), and 'Dereinst, dereinst' (soprano and contralto). 'Minnespiel', Op. 101, contains the beautiful duet for alto and bass, 'Ich bin dein Baum', while the 'Spanische Liebeslieder', a posthumous work, Op. 138, has little that is really effective for the public, except the baritone song, 'Fluthenreicher Ebro'.

It is no wonder that the beautiful form so

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well exploited by Brahms should have attracted English composers, and brief mention must be made of Stanford's set of lyrics from Tennyson's 'Princess', the second of which, 'Sweet and low', gives beautiful opportunities for fine singing of triplets that bear a slight emphasis on the first note. Some of the series, such as 'The Splendour falls' and 'Our Enemies have fallen', suggest that they may have been originally conceived for chorus; but others are pure quartets of very high quality. 'Tears, idle tears' is difficult to keep in tune, for the modulations are by no means obvious, and the changes of mood, as it were within the elegiac mood of the whole, must be followed closely. The deeply poetical passage at 'Ah, sad and strange', where a *più mosso* is marked, and the arpeggio accompaniment of the former portion gives place to gloomy chords, is not easy to realize, except with four singers who are constantly associated with each other. In the last, 'Ask me no more', the soprano has a difficult opening phrase, having to sing C flat almost immediately after C natural; in unaccompanied music, care would have to be taken to sing the former note fully flat, so as to emphasize the contrast with the C natural, but here, even if it is sung as a real C flat in just intonation, it will

seem wrong, as the piano has to put in its tempered C flat at the end of the bar, thus making a real C flat sound too flat. It is perhaps best for the soprano singer to think of B natural in taking the note. A work of remarkable imagination and charm is a set of Pastorals for four voices with accompaniment of piano and string quartet by Dr. H. Walford Davies. From the first 'call' of the tenor in a kind of plain-song sung *a piacere*, to the unconventional ending with a sixth put into the final triad, all is interesting and full of beauty. There are many problems of ensemble, but chiefly between the string quartet and the voices, since in a small room, as is noticed in the composer's prefatory note, even the 'most refined *piano* of the string quartet was still too loud for its purpose'. Throughout the string parts are of course subordinated to the voices. The 'Nursery Rhymes' of the same composer are of a simpler structure, and the occasional prominence given to one part or the other is impossible to mistake.

Dr. Ernest Walker's 'Five Songs from *England's Helicon*' are among the most artistic of recent compositions of the kind, for all are effective and admirably written both for the voices and for the piano, though for this latter a very large stretch is required. In No. 4, 'Wodenfride's Song', each

voice in turn has a little solo, followed by the same refrain in which all four take part; care must be taken by the soloist who has just been prominent to fall back, as it were, into line with the others, in the refrain, exactly as has to be done in the quartet from *The Gondoliers*, already mentioned. In the fifth and last song, the soprano, alto, and bass are merely part of the accompaniment of the beautiful tenor song, having even less individuality than in Brahms's 'Fragen' since they simply echo the soloist's words.

For every reason it were to be wished that more attention could be given to the special art of singing concerted music; there can be no better training for the voice, if proper supervision be exercised at first by some one who has experience. Even rounds and catches are better practice than nothing, and some of them can be made not only amusing, but delightful to listen to. Singers as a rule are far behind other musicians in the art of reading at sight, and every effort to sing concerted music must improve this. Beside the educational value of this form of music, it has a peculiarity which is unapproached in other forms; for the acoustic effect of four well-balanced voices singing music that is well written for the combination is a great deal more

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more than four times the power even of the most powerful voice among them. Certain moments in Brahms's 'Liebeslieder' have a special individuality of tone-effect that nothing else can rival, and every effort that is made to revive and maintain the practice of concerted singing is of real use to the art.



## CHAPTER VI

### SOLO-SINGING AND ACCOMPANIMENT

THE ideal relation between a vocal solo and its accompaniment obviously includes some of the elements of ensemble. A pianist who had no idea of following the lead of another performer would make a very poor accompanist, though he might be the most brilliant and popular of soloists. The conditions of the 'consort' between the singer and the pianist are not by any means the same as those we have been examining hitherto; for the singer's position (when the two are sounding together) is almost always paramount, the normal position of the accompaniment being that of an appropriate background to the conception or interpretation of the song. Lyrical music of this kind occupies so large a place in our modern musical life that it seems worth while to go into the minutest detail in examining its requirements. The first and chief difference between this and other kinds of ensemble is that the element of personality enters in to a very large extent in the solo part and not at all in the

accompaniment. The personality of the singer is at the same time one of his most valuable assets, and a difficult problem which each must solve in his own way. How far should he represent the people of whom he sings? If he allows his personality to be too conspicuous, he runs the risk of making his song seem like an ineffective passage from an opera, where, of course, personality cannot be too prominent. If, on the other hand, he realizes the difference between lyrical and dramatic art, he will be apt to err on the side of tameness. This question, interesting as it is, is not by any means the main subject of this chapter; for the ideal accompanist has a very much greater difficulty to overcome, since he must understand at every point of any song whether the voice merely needs support or whether there is a part which should be made prominent on the piano.

The history of the Song as we now know it is to be read in the text-books and dictionaries, but it is not quite clear at what point the custom began of giving the pianoforte something to do besides the mere conventional little 'symphonies' before and after the vocal part. Of course, before that practice began, there was nothing for an accompanist to do but to give sufficient support

for the voice to make itself effective. This style of accompaniment occupied the entire field during the reign of the 'figured Bass', and for many a long year after that was discarded in favour of something more definite, the same absence of any musical interest in the accompaniment is to be traced even in certain songs of very great masters. For these uneventful accompaniments, the player will of course try to adopt a style of complete self-abnegation, merely giving the voice the basis upon which it can make its proper impression. Here we meet with the necessity for enlarging our musical vocabulary, for there is no word to express a kind of tone from which all real musical interest is withdrawn. It may be loud or soft, may have light and shade in it, but its distinctive quality must be that it is unnoticed. Yet it must not sound like the efforts of a tired governess at the end of a day with troublesome children; even the word 'dry' conveys the idea of a touch that is too brilliant, and 'dull' gives a wrong impression. Properly understood, the word 'dead' seems to be the best to describe what is here meant, but with a deadness that can be changed into life at any moment. The associations of the word prevent its use, and we must content ourselves with

‘inexpressive’, which, in its use by Shakespeare and Milton, conveys the idea of inexpressible rather than that of lacking expression. As the driver of a motor-car must judge what is the best proportion in which to combine the air and the petrol in the driving mixture, so must the accompanist use his artistic powers to guide him in the amount of life or vividness he puts into any given passage. As a rule, songs that have one persistent figure of accompaniment, from the earliest specimens of the ‘Alberti bass’, to such a song as Schubert’s ‘Litanei’, need this unobtrusive style of playing all through; and the player’s only care, having established the figure, must be to accommodate the figure to the singer’s wishes. Should the singer slacken the time, the accompanist must spread the slackening over the whole of the group of notes of which the figure consists. In such a place as bar 3 of ‘Litanei’, for example, the four semiquavers must be adjusted to the execution of the turn in the voice-part; only a very bad accompanist will play the first three notes of the group in strict time, and then pause on the fourth until the singer has quite finished the ornament. (This is so obvious a truth that I should be a little ashamed of mentioning it, had I not heard such

wonderful things perpetrated by those who hold a recognized position among professional accompanists.) It seems almost blasphemous to associate the word 'dead' or 'inexpressive' with so beautiful an accompaniment as that of 'Litanei', but it is difficult to find any word that will give the idea of what I mean. All the words like 'unobtrusive', 'background', and the rest, suggest an amount of softness of tone that is by no means always required. The 'inexpressive' touch must vary with the voice-part in volume, and the pedal need not be dispensed with altogether; I have taken an extreme instance like 'Litanei' to emphasize the fact that my use of the word 'inexpressive' does not mean the exclusion of all musical qualities, and of course the little melody at the end of each verse is to be given with full artistic meaning and expression.

I have already pointed out that it is difficult to say at what moment in the history of the Song the accompaniment began to have points of musical interest as distinct from the singer's part. In Bach, whose separate songs are of course only with a figured bass, only one other treatment of the accompaniment occurs, that in which there is a regular obbligato for an instrument, making up a duet with the voice. By the time of Haydn

and Mozart the value of the accompaniment as a separate means of expression is already perceived, and in the 'Canzonets' of the former there are numberless cases of its use in this way, even with occasional pictorial suggestion, as in 'My Mother bids me bind my hair', where the words 'While others dance and play' inspire a little skittish figure in the accompaniment. Such a song as this would be a first-rate exercise for one who wished to become a good accompanist; it would be at once perceived as ridiculous if one were to play the little figure just mentioned with the same 'inexpressive' phrasing that has been right in the former bars. In the songs of Zumsteeg, who is generally regarded as the pioneer of the 'Art Ballad' in Germany, the ritornelli or what were called 'symphonies' by English musicians contain all the passages in which the accompanist is allowed any individuality or phrasing of his own; and the same holds good of a very large number of songs, even down to modern times. Loewe wrote many ballads in which the connecting theme of the whole is occasionally brought in in the accompaniment, and Beethoven, in the 'Liederkreis'— 'An die ferne Geliebte', puts exquisite bits of ritornello into each of the songs, and binds them

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together with the theme of the first, resumed at the close; this resumption is begun by the piano, which heralds the change (three bars before the three-four time) with little imitations of the voice-part, and a flourish, which, though soft, must yet be fully alive. In Schubert there are plenty of instances of all kinds of treatment of accompaniment, from the simplest arpeggio figure to the most elaborate and even technically difficult accompaniment; but in nearly all cases, the figure of accompaniment must be mostly kept in the background, and individuality reserved for the ritornelli. Even here there are comparatively few examples of the kind of 'duet-song' that is so common both in Schumann and Brahms. 'Die junge Nonne' has plenty of pictorial treatment, and the left hand of the accompaniment must have life all the way through; the twice-repeated notes at the end of the phrase suggesting the bell must be softly emphatic with a certain element of percussion. 'Der Zwerg' with its continuous tremolando accompaniment must have life in it, for it must suggest the movement of the sea, as well as the turmoil that is going on in the minds of the persons it describes. The rhythmic figure in the bass must be marked. As an example of the perfection of accompaniment with

the use of the 'inexpressive' touch I have been speaking about, take Sir George Henschel's singing of 'Das Wandern', the first of the 'Müllerlieder'. The accompaniment obviously represented<sup>1</sup> the monotonous turning of the mill-wheel; this went on quite continuously from beginning to end, without the smallest intrusion of individuality; yet, as though by magic, the singer seemed to have perfect freedom of phrasing on the top of this support and there were even rubato passages here and there, which notwithstanding synchronized exactly to all appearance with the notes of the accompaniment. Like 'Die junge Nonne', 'Erlkönig' has a bass that is vividly alive below a dead figure of reiterated octaves; many pianists have felt as if they would die if the song went on much longer, but the more the wrist suffers from the octaves, the greater is the relief in the part of the accompaniment which supports the Erl-king's words. The chords must be spread, and may have life in them, but the triplet figure must be just 'kept going' without any touch of character. But the chief difficulty of the song is for the singer, in spite of the trying nature of the accompaniment. Shall it be a kind of ventriloquial entertainment, with imitations of three characters,

<sup>1</sup> Alas, that the past tense must be used !



or a mere recitation to music of Goethe's poem? My own feeling is that Goethe and Schubert have done so much to differentiate the three characters that the latter is a far smaller fault than the former. In interpretations that have been greatly admired, I have had suggestions of a bluff English farmer, a rickety boy with a man's voice, and an 'old-clothes man' of strongly Semitic physiognomy. I cannot think that this is right, even though the singer, or rather the 'entertainer', got much applauded for his work. It is clear to all thoughtful people that the ideal interpretation is somewhere between the two extremes. Considering the changes in the style of the music, the merest suggestion of the different characters should be enough to enable ordinary hearers to realize that there are three different persons in the story, and nothing more is wanted. The one channel through which the ideas reach the listeners must always be, and be felt to be, the same, namely, the single voice of the singer. To attempt so to colour the voice that it is felt to be several different voices is only a poor effort in the direction of those remarkable performers who some years ago used to delight music-hall audiences by enacting a whole play by themselves with rapid changes during their transit from one

side of the stage to the other. In such surroundings tricks of this sort are perfectly allowable and even amusing ; but when the system is applied to one of the masterpieces of literature and music, it is like a performance of Hamlet undertaken by Fregoli single-handed. The tendency to exaggerate 'colour' has not as yet been as marked in England as in Germany, but it is bad enough among ourselves ; I have heard the end of Schumann's 'Frühlingsnacht' shouted in a way which implied that the nightingale uttered, not the words 'Sie ist dein', but 'Extra Special ; all the winners' ! In such songs as those already referred to there can be no doubt as to the kind of colour that is desired, whatever may be its depth ; sometimes it happens that a more complicated expression has to be given, and here the 'colourists' are seldom content to leave anything to the composer, for fear of being thought lacking in intelligence themselves. In Sullivan's 'Golden Legend' a young baritone who was to sing the part of Lucifer came to me with a grand idea in his head, that in the passage where Lucifer joins in the hymn of the monks the singer might imitate in his voice a sanctimonious expression, and at the same time show in his tones the fact that he was an evil spirit. The

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practical result of all this elaboration was exactly what might have been foreseen—an absolute flatness of utterance, conveying nothing whatever. The end of Schumann's 'Beiden Grenadiere' is a constant problem in the matter of colour; singers of the kind I have been referring to cannot be content to leave the suggestion of the dying man's collapse to the accompaniment, but must needs try to convey in the final sung words an idea of exhaustion. The fact that the diminuendo only begins after the voice is silent should have shown them that the soldier's last effort is kept bravely up till the end. But even the final bars of the accompaniment have been resented by certain singers, who like to end up with 'a jolly noise', and have actually sung the song with a few cheerful straightforward chords to end up with. This piece of vandalism is happily a thing of the past, and it is unlikely that the song will any more be put as an 'extra' turn for Devilshoof in *The Bohemian Girl*. For the world does move, even if artistic progress in England is not very rapid.

Such things have little enough to do with ensemble, strictly speaking, except in so far as an accompanist with the root of the matter in him can often give hints to the singer in matters

of restraining him from overdoing the 'colour' or the interpretation of such points as have been noticed. Schumann is fond, as no one was before him, of giving little dialogues to the voice and accompaniment, as in 'Der Nussbaum', where the melodic phrase begun in the vocal part is finished in the instrumental. It stands to reason that the singer's way of taking each must be exactly copied by the pianist in the matter of tone-force, so that the connexion between the beginning of the phrase and its conclusion may be properly brought out. 'Waldesgespräch' is another song in which the singer and player must have very definite understandings. The beginning must be as like horns as the pianist can make it, and, where the reiterated chords come in the right hand of the accompaniment, the 'dead' tone must be adopted for five bars, the chords at 'du schöne Braut' coming to life again. The arpeggios that accompany the Loreley's words must be taken so as to sound as rich and harmonious as possible, with a good deal of tone despite the necessary *piano*. At the close, 'es ist schon spät', the reiterated chords must get gradually less emphatic, until the bar in which the word 'kalt' occurs; then they must as it were come altogether out of their retirement, and

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culminate in the three dreadful reiterations of the next bar for the climax of the song. According to the inexpressiveness of the repeated chords earlier in the song, will be their effect at the end. In Schumann's best-known song-cycles, 'Frauenliebe und -leben' and 'Dichterliebe', there are instrumental epilogues to the sets which sum up all that has gone before. The relations of the modern singer and the modern accompanist were never better illustrated than in a performance I once heard of the former, in which the lady singer, her work accomplished, looked extremely annoyed to think that the pianist '*would* go on playing' after she had finished; meanwhile he, poor man, had been so 'kept in his place' by various domineering artists that he attempted nothing more individual in style than the accompaniments he had been playing, and so the beautiful and most poetical conception went for nothing. The end of the 'Dichterliebe' is even more important, and this I have heard so tamely played that the emotion of the series of songs was all dissipated long before the end. Of course, during this 'andante espressivo' the beginning of the piano solo should be not too emotional, but at the seventh bar, where a characteristically Schumannesque passage occurs, a great deal of

freedom may be allowed until the end, and right up to the end the listeners should be made to feel that here is the real climax of what they have been hearing. Much can be done by the demeanour of the singer who must wait through it; and one could almost say that a singer who had sufficient self-control to stand on the platform without appearing impatient or absurd in any way, might be trusted to excel in ensemble of every kind, since it would prove him to possess that consideration for others which is at the root of all good ensemble. \* \*

The whole set of the 'Magelone-Lieder' of Brahms are the finest possible study for this matter of ensemble, but they require so intimate a study both from the vocal and instrumental point of view that only more or less finished artists should undertake them, and these only when constant association can be enjoyed. In this master's songs, the accompanist requires less of the inexpressive tone of which I have been speaking than in almost any other composer's work; from the simplest to the most elaborate, from the lovely little 'Sandmännchen' to the 'Ernste Gesänge' of the close of his life, every bar of every accompaniment must have life in it, and nearly all are true ducts, although here and

there, as in the arrangements of real 'Volkslieder', and in the songs in the folk-song style, there are instances where nothing but an inexpressive accompaniment is needed. The splendid song 'Verrath' demands the power of suggesting three characters, the husband, lover, and the treacherous wife, but it can be made even more absurd than 'Erlkönig' by means of exaggerated 'colour'. 'Vergebliches Ständchen' with its dialogue needs only a more obvious contrast of tone.

There is no lack of modern songs of all kinds where the pianist must needs be an accomplished musician, and not a few where he is required to take the front of the stage either throughout the song or for a great part of it. In the beautiful song-cycle by Peter Cornelius, 'Weihnachtslieder', there are many instances where a perfect ensemble between voice and piano is absolutely necessary. In the first the piano part, whether or not it is identical with the theme sung by the voice, must be brought out a little more than is usual, even at the parts which are not marked 'hervortretend' by the composer. In No. 2 (sometimes called No. 2 b, since there is another earlier setting of the words), 'Hirten wachen im Feld', the pianissimo suggestions of pastoral music must be given with feeling of their character, and where

the angelic chorus is described care must be taken to play the chords *not* arpeggio ; here the singer, whose part is not the melody, must make his voice sound as if he were singing in the inner part of a choral work ; his style must be quite inexpressive. In No. 3 (or 3 b), 'Drei Kön'ge', the delivery of the chorale on the piano must be the chief thing observed ; the vocal part need not be inexpressive, but the tone must be reserved for the ending of the song, where the Epiphany lesson is applied in the words 'O Menschenkind' ; here the utmost warmth must be given by the singer. In No. 4 the pianist's left hand must be carefully phrased against the inexpressive playing of the right-hand chords. No. 5 must have everything the pianist knows put into the opening chords, to set the mood of tender beauty in the right way. The most beautiful legato possible will not be out of place in the semiquaver passage. No. 6 must suggest a little dance-measure and complete the Germanic domesticity of the whole cycle.

In rarer instances, the piano must dominate the whole composition from beginning to end. ]  
 Cornelius's 'Ein Ton' is a song which will occur to every one in this connexion ; the singer has just the one chance of varying his 'colour' on the



single note, but all the musical interest is in the piano part, and an inexpressive playing of this would be far worse than a colourless performance of the vocal part. The finest example of a complete change of vocal 'colour' on a sustained note was during a performance of Rossini's *Stabat Mater* many years ago. In the duet, 'Quis est homo', there is a passage where the supporting harmonies are changed suddenly below the voices. Here Mme Patti altered the texture, so to speak, of her note so as to suit the altered harmony, yet without impairing its continuity or its sonority.

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the 'Liebeslieder' of Brahms; and only at the very end must the waltz-sounds die away as the lovers go out into the garden. It is no doubt because the proper relation between voice and piano in this song is not better understood that it has not become as universally popular as it deserves to be.

The whole question of the ensemble of voice and piano is one that has been very little considered by either class of musicians, yet it is one on which a very great deal of effect depends, and in which artistic instincts and good taste, or their absence, are unerringly revealed.

## CHAPTER VII

### OPERATIC ENSEMBLE

IN the world of opera the word ensemble bears a meaning that is quite distinct from those that we have been considering. The art of performing music in perfect concord or rather 'consort' may, and occasionally does, make itself felt in opera, but the special sense of the word in theatrical parlance is a less subtle thing than the art with which these chapters have been dealing. 'A good ensemble,' in speaking of opera, is a phrase often used by those who detest the old-fashioned 'star' system and are congratulating themselves upon the cast being of all-round excellence, without reference to any skill the performers may possess in the interplay of their voices or acting. With this loose sense we have little or nothing to do; every one now knows that M. Valabrégue's famous ideal '*Ma femme et quatre ou cinq poupées*' is not to be imitated; but even with a higher aim than this there are many ways in which an operatic cast, or for that matter, a dramatic cast, may be spoilt by the

presence of some incongruous element. A clever manager will of course do his best to suit the members of his cast one to another by all the arts of make-up, &c. ; but beyond these devices there is an element of personality which comes far more into theatrical performances than it ever does into those which are purely musical. Temperament will naturally be considered, and only a fit of momentary aberration on the part of the manager, or a more easily excusable though misplaced ambition on the part of famous popular singers will account for such things as the appearance of Mme Patti as Carmen, or Mme Melba as Brünnhilde. Of course it is possible to fall into the opposite error, and to consider certain artists as always fixed in certain grooves while they are quite capable of making a great success in other kinds of parts than those with which they are usually identified. In Germany, for example, Mme Lilli Lehmann was for years confined to the dull round of 'coloratura' parts because of her vocal proficiency; not until the later years of her artistic life did she appear in the great Wagner parts, and then not in Germany until she had made them her own in England and America. But as a rule all but the most versatile artists have some line from which they only

depart at the risk of losing some of their popularity ; and it is the work of the ideal manager to take advantage of these natural peculiarities and to combine them in such a way that they may make their greatest effect upon the hearers. It does not often happen that so happy an allotment of parts is made as that which gave special distinction to one of Mme Patti's last appearances in opera at Covent Garden. Her Zerlina in *Don Juan* had been universally accepted and held to rank with the best impersonations in operatic history ; in the course of her 'farewell' performances, Signor Pini-Corsi, a baritone singer of the highest accomplishment but of diminutive stature, was her Masetto. In the ballroom scene at the end of the first act, the two rustic lovers, who looked hardly more than children, sat during the proceedings on a gorgeous sofa that to all appearance was too lofty and wide to allow of their putting their feet to the ground ; so they sat, stroking the satin covering, with their legs stuck out straight in front of them, and were lost in admiration at all they saw.

Such things as this, and such a way of taking advantage of physical peculiarities, are naturally harder to bring about in operas than in plays, because of the obvious limitations of the human

voice, and the fact that tenors cannot be asked to undertake bass parts, nor contraltos those that are written for soprano.

But these difficulties which beset the path of the operatic manager are not likely to affect the ordinary person except in the way of enhancing his enjoyment, all unconsciously to himself, if the manager has done his work well, and spoiling it if the cast is ill composed. There are numerous cases where the real art of ensemble must be considered, though perhaps not in such detail as has been attempted in the preceding chapters. The groups of three female singers in *Die Zauberflöte* and the trios of Rhine-daughters in the Wagnerian trilogy are examples of concerted music in which no differentiation whatever between one character and another could be imagined. The same thing applies to some extent in the concerted music for the Walkyries in *Die Walküre*, although Waltraute is always a little apart from the rest. In these pieces the more nearly assimilated the voices are in quality and strength, the better will be their effect in combination. As in the kind of concerted vocal music spoken of in Chapter IV, the groundwork of effective singing in these portions is undoubtedly the *voix blanche* which has the maximum of tone

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that blends with other voices. It is the great delight of operatic ensemble, in this stricter sense, that each voice, whether of soloists or chorus, reinforces the others, and produces an effect of sonority which nothing else can give. For this cause, the composers who have succeeded best in 'grand opera' have been the most fond of great concerted pieces for a large number of characters. The works of Meyerbeer are of course out of fashion, and it is extremely unlikely that they will ever come into vogue again; but they had the merit of sonority caused by cleverly interwoven voices of the same or different character. But to compare the septet of the duel in *Les Huguenots* with the septet at the end of the first act of *Tannhäuser* is to realize the difference between flashy writing and real character-drawing in music. In Meyerbeer everybody shouts on his most effective note, and a general impression of swagger and straightforward valour is created; in Wagner, the relative importance of the personages of the drama is well indicated, as well as their individuality, in the concerted music which gives us all Wolfram's tenderness, and the Landgrave's dignity, as well as Tannhäuser's ardour of recovered daylight and sanity. In these sonorous ensembles, it may be held that Verdi

was the greatest master of all ; for not only does he give us in *Aïda* a specimen of cumulative climax in respect of tone, but in the famous quartet of *Rigoletto* there is a perfect example of the differentiation of the four parts. All four are individuals, and all sing not merely 'in character', bearing out the temperaments that we have realized in earlier scenes, but they are actually more 'alive' in the quartet than anywhere else. For even in the exquisite quartet in the first act of *Fidelio* the four do nothing more, in a dramatic sense, than maintain the characters they have already displayed ; but the sobs of Gilda, the coquetry of Maddalena, and the sensuality of the Duke's 'devil-may-care' phrases all throw a light on their characters that has not been thrown before.

*Lohengrin* contains three duets which will illustrate better than anything else the kinds of styles which are required in different situations. It is obvious that the scene in Act II between Ortrud and Frederick is to be given in a declamatory style by both ; and that in Act III a smooth cantabile phrasing is called for in the dialogue of Elsa with Lohengrin. The admirably dramatic scene between Ortrud and Elsa in Act II throws the natures of the two women into the sharpest



contrast, and in the few bars which they sing together this difference must be well brought out by the executants as it has been by the composer. Of course Elsa will sing in a quiet, comparatively inexpressive way, with beautiful cantabile, while Ortrud must be declamatory ; but the actual length of the quavers and semiquavers should differ slightly in the two parts. Elsa's phrasing will have a tendency to enlarge the value of the shorter notes by very slight anticipation of their beginning, while Ortrud will prolong her longer notes, giving the dotted quavers almost the value of quavers with double dots.

There is a natural affinity, it would seem, between opera of a comic type and concerted music ; it is a matter of history that the concerted finale occurs for the first time in comic opera, not tragic, and from Loggeseino to Sullivan concerted numbers seem to find their natural place in comedy. Even Richard Strauss yields to what must be a natural instinct in this respect, for he puts elaborate concerted numbers into his *Rosenkavalier* the like of which appear in no other of his operas.

It is quite possible that those who first docked *Don Gioranni* of its most beautiful number, the final ensemble after the Don has disappeared,

may have unconsciously felt that the opera had been converted by Mozart's witchery from the comic to the tragic *genre*. On the rare occasions on which it has been given on the English stage, its effect has been to lighten the nervous tension of the audience; and it is curious that large concerted finales do seem to be actually more appropriate to comic opera than to the other kind. In this great finale, as in the sextet, 'Sola, sola', in the preceding scene, it is clear that Desprello is set in opposition to the rest of the characters in a way that demands from his representative exceptional powers of quality and volume of voice. The structure of the finale is very curious, for the voices and instruments are used almost as if in a symphony. The violins deliver the opening subject with all importance, and continue it after the voices have entered with the words 'Ah! dov'è il perfido?' Even after Donna Anna's little solo begins, the vocal part is intentionally deprived of musical interest, the hearers' attention being diverted by the charming dialogue between the strings on the one hand, and the flutes and oboes on the other. Through the whole of this first movement, in fact, the voices are as it were part of the rich accompaniment, and any attempt to give individuality to any of the parts

other than Leporello's would be a mistake. The *Larghetto* begun by Don Ottavio is of course an exquisitely vocal section, and nothing in the whole of Mozart is more wonderful than the way he differentiates the six characters without altering the thematic scheme; all have similar phrases to sing, yet each turns the allotted phrases so as to fit his or her individuality. The smooth accents of the 'heavy lovers', as they may be called, Donna Elvira's intention to take the veil, Zerlina and Masetto's determination to have a good (and let us hope uninterrupted) supper, and Leporello's purpose of seeking for another place, are all expressed in nearly related musical phrases, yet all are distinguished from each other; some of the separate utterances have to be got over in a very few seconds, and there is therefore all the greater necessity for the singers to make them stand out properly. The four bars in which the peasants and Leporello make their parting reference to the poor Don's present place of abode must be given with absolutely perfect tuning of the unisonous passage; the droll resumption of a happier mood at the words 'E noi tutti, o buona gente' must be sung with the utmost lightness and neatness in contrast to the preceding unison and the beginning of the summing-up of the

whole matter. The rapid passage for first violins and flute must be the most prominent. The opening phrase of 'Questo è il fin di chi fa mal' and the whole movement to the end must be sung with full tone so as to give value to the monumental progressions of the harmonies. The curious sudden fortes in the alternate bars at the words 'E de' perfidi la morte' are among the more obvious effects of the piece, so that they are not likely to be overlooked by any conductor or singers, excepting of course such as would give in without a protest to the managerial desire to cut out the finale altogether.

In like manner, those who are great artists enough to undertake the parts in *Falstaff* will find little difficulty in giving the right expression to the final fugue, but there are some points in which even accomplished singers have been known to fail. The qualities that make up an ideal Falstaff, that command of the lightest prattling tone with sufficient sonority to give the due dignity to certain parts, are not likely to include such musicianship as will divine that the opening phrase of the fugue 'Tutto nel mondo è burla' is but the logical conclusion of the series of descending intervals just played by the orchestra. If it could be got to sound like the

end of the sequence, it would add enormously to the effect of the whole finale; the difficulty of making the ensemble understood is that singers will not make enough diminuendo on the word 'l'uom' so as to get a real pianissimo afterwards; each of the eight parts has its own entry, and by the time the other seven are in full swing, with Bardolph and Pistol putting in their independent parts, there is not much chance for Dr. Caius to make the theme prominent; the counter-exposition by the four principals must of course be taken so that each is prominent during the course of the theme, and the subordinate parts, with the chorus, must be well kept under by the conductor, the whole being given with the least possible weight of tone, excepting only in the held notes of the chorus, and these must be without character. The point at the very end, where the whole thing stops and Falstaff begins with the words 'tutti gabbati' quite softly and at a slower pace, is so self-evident that it may be entrusted to the singers to do it properly. Throughout this wonderful finale, all the performers, with the possible exception of Falstaff, must attain to that pitch of altruism which we have shown to be necessary in all branches of music where ensemble is concerned. In the great majority of operas of all dates and

styles, personality is so valuable an asset to the singer that he must guard against practising the virtue of altruism in excess ; it is only rarely that the *voix blanche* or a colourless tone can be used effectively on the stage, for the stage-manager will see to it that representatives of unimportant parts are not allowed to attract too much notice to themselves, and he will perform the function of repressing unsuitable energy, that function which the artist must perform for himself in all the other branches of ensemble, excepting only in choral and orchestral works, where the conductor is his master.

Still, despite all the need for preserving individuality on the stage, managers will not like an artist the less because that artist shows that he can give way to others when occasion may require ; and here, as everywhere else in art, the faculty of thinking of and for others is of the utmost value.

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